

THE
Prodigal Son

Returned to his Father's House :

S H E W I N G
The Readiness of GOD to pardon
and forgive Returning
PRODIGALS.

To which is added,
A DISCOURSE of Repentance,
Fully opening the Nature of it ; with some
Serious Perswasives to the speedy setting
about this Great Duty.
Fitted for the **USE** of Young Persons, and
necessary for all Christian Families.

The Eighth Edition.

By **JOHN HATWARD, D.D.**

Luke xv. 18.

*I will arise, and go to my Father, and say unto
him, I have sinned against Heaven and before
Thee.*

Enter'd in the Hall-Book of the Company of
Stationers. according to Act of Parliament.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Edw. Midwinter*, at the *Three
Crowns* and *Looking-glass* in *St. Paul's
Church yard.*

Price bound one Shilling.

Mod. gal. 200

43

44

6

37



TO THE
READER.

AS there is nothing that prevails with poor Prodigals to return to their Father's House, more than the Remembrance of his being their Father; so there is nothing more affects the Heart of God, than to see his poor wandring Prodigals confessing their Sins and Unworthiness, and returning to him, as to a Gracious and Merciful Father: This stirs up his Bowels of Compassion towards them: For as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. And this Love of God to his returning Prodigals is the more amazing, in that these Prodigals make their Father's House their last Refuge. Alas! could this Prodigal Son have but filled his Belly with the Husks that were given to the Swine, he would never have thought of the Bread that was in his Father's House; but, like a Swine as he was, he would have fed

among the Swine still. But herein is the Riches of Divine Grace to be adored, that where God has a purpose of Grace to poor Sinners, he knocks his Fingers off of all other Holds (though they would be but vain) that so, they seeing all other Refuges failing them, they may at last come to that try'd Stone, which God has laid for a Foundation in Zion; that so being built upon him, they might never be confounded. And this very kind Reception which poor returning Prodigals find from their Heavenly Father, after they have spent all their Portion in riotous Living, does exceedingly illustrate the rich Grace of God to poor Sinners, and an Encouragement to them to consider their Ways, and be wise. And that the following Sermons may be so many prevailing Motives to them, to leave the Husks of brutish Appetites and Affections, which in the midst of all their Fullness can never yield them any real Satisfaction, and that they may come to taste of these true and relishing Delights which are laid up in him, in whom all Fullness dwells, is the Desire and Prayer of

Thy Soul's Well-wisher,

J. H.

THE Prodigal Son

RETURN'D

To his Father's House, &c.

SERMON I.

Luke xv. 17. 18, 19.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with Hunger?

I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee,

And am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired Servants.

HAVING promised in a former Treatise * to shew the exceeding Readiness and Mercy of God, in

* Called, The Sincere Penitent.

pardoning our Sins, upon our returning
A 4 to

to him, I thought I could not do it better than by making the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Ground-work of my Discourse : It being a sufficient Foundation for the Superstructure I am going to raise upon it, in all the several Branches thereof ; and a lively Representation of the State and Condition of every Man that comes into the World by Nature. For GOD has given every one a Portion, a Talent, something that he may improve, to the Glory of his Name, and to his own Advantage : And we are all so Self-opinionated, and conceited of our own Abilities, that we are willing to have our Portion in our own Hands, and at our own Disposal. We doubt not but we can of our selves improve it to the best Advantage ; and therefore we come boldly with the Prodigal in our Text, and say to our Father, *Father, give me the Portion of Goods that fallath to me.* And our indulgent Father, tho' he knows and sees well enough what will be the Issue of it, and what a miserable Improvement we shall make of our Portion, yet) that our selves may

may come to know ourselves, and see the Evil that is in our own Hearts, he gratifies us in our foolish Requests, and delivers us our Portion into our own Hands: And while that lasts, we take Solomon's ironical Counsel, *Eccles. xi. 9. Rejoyce, O Young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes.* These Things we readily pursue, but little think of the heavy After-clap, That for all these Things God will bring us unto Judgment. The poor Prodigal no sooner received his Portion, but he gave up the Reins to his Lust, took his Fall of Sensual Pleasures and Delights, and soon spent his Portion and wasted his Substance with Riotous Living. And see now the bitter End of Sensual Pleasures: After he had spent all, there arose mighty Famine in that Land, and began to be in Want: His Portion was spent, his Substance was wasted: Those that had most, began to be in Want: What then must become of him that had spent all? It was no Wonder that he began to be in Want: What must

he now do? Why, he now goes and joyns himself to a *Citizen* of that Country; he had still a Hanking after Sin, and therefore chuses to be a Servant, a Slave, a Hog-keeper, rather than to leave that Country. O how much are poor Sinners in love with their Chains: How much rather had they to continue the *Slaves of Satan*, and the *Devil's Drudges*, than to think of getting into the glorious freedom of the *Children of God*? He had rather be a *Swine-herd*, a *Swine-feeder in the Kingdom of Darkness*, than once to think of returning to his *Father*. *David* professes, He had rather be a *Door-keeper in the House of his God*, than to dwell in the *Tents of Wickedness*: But this *Prodigal*, on the contrary, had rather be a *Hog-feeder in the Tents of Wickedness*, than to return to his *Father's House*. But he must undergo further *Hardships* still; and those Husks that were scarce good enough for the *Swine*, are thought too good for him. He that a while ago, nothing would serve but the most delicious *Dainties*, and the choicest *Wine*, with whatever might

might stir up and maintain carnal Delights and Affections, is now brought to that pass, that he would be glad to be a Mess-mate with the Swine, and fill his Belly with the Husks that were given then : But, alas ! even this was not permitted him ; for no Man gave unto him. And 'tis well they did not ; for could he have got but a Belly full, tho' but of Husks and Hog's Meat, he would never have had a Thought of returning to his *Father's House*. O how much Mercy is there in our worldly Disappointments ! How fain would we be taking hold of the things of this present Life, and cleaving fast to them, if God by his *Providence* did not knock off our Fingers ? O how feign would this *Prodigal* have fill'd his Belly with Husks, but no Man gave unto him ! And truly this, to an Eye of Sense, was a bad Condition, a most grievous Case indeed. What ! not to be allowed to feed among Swine ! Not afforded a few Husks ! What Condition could be more dismal and deplorable ? And yet this was the greatest Mercy that could befall this *Prodigal* : There was no other way
but

but this to cure him, to bring him to himself.

Sin is a bewitching thing ; it effaciates the Soul, and takes away the right Use of our Reason : We act not, while we are under the Power of Sin, as Men, but as Mad-men ; as those that are besides themselves ; and therefore the Prophet, or rather God by the Prophet, setting before his People the Madness and Folly of their Idolatry, bid 'em *remember this, and shew themselves Men* ; which is as much as if he had said, Whilst you follow your Idols, you are beside your selves ; you are effacinated ; shew your selves but Men, and you must needs be convinced of your Folly. And so it was with this poor Prodigal ; he had lain out himself in the Service of Sin, which had so much debased all his Faculties, and emasculated his very Soul, that it had left no room in him for Consideration ; so that he could not so much as think what would be the Issue of it. But now being forced to bite upon the Bridle, and not so much as the Hopes of a Supply from any other Hand, being
in

in view, this was a Means of bringing him to himself: How many Souls are destroy'd for want of Consideration! Now a Day of Adversity is a Day of Consideration: And hence the wise Man tells us, *Eccles. vii. In the Day of Adversity consider.* And therefore the first Step this Prodigal takes, in order to his Return, is to become a thinking and considerative Person: He debates his own Case with himself; for so says our Text, *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough, &c.* Before he drove on furiously, considering nothing present, reflecting on nothing past, nor regarding any thing that might come after. Now he grows cool, reasons the Case, and deliberates what is like to be the Issue of Things, if he continues thus, and what therefore is fittest to be done for the future.

And thus it is with every Penitent, returning Sinner: The first Essay of Repentance, is a Relenting Thoughtfulness, and a serious and Pensive Consideration. As soon as he is gotten out
of

of the *Noise of the World*, the *Charms of Pleasure*, and *Hurry of his own Passions*, he sits down and considers, he endeavours to see with his own Eyes, and not be led by Rumour or Example: he exercises his Reason, and resolves to judge impartially of Things, and from this *Epocha*, or *Point of Time*, the first Conceptions of Good in him bear Date.

But, 2. From the forsaide *Deliberation*, he proceeds to *Resolution*: *I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto him, &c.* That is, I have been foolishly hurried on hitherto, and was upon the Brink of Destruction before I apprehended my Danger; I dreamed of new Discoveries of fresh Pleasures in my bold Adventures; but now I perceive my Way is hedg'd up with Thorns, and there is but one Way left me; I must try my *Father's Clemency*, or perish: whether he will receive me or not, I cannot tell; but that I find must be the Way, or none; therefore I am resolved to make the Experiment: If he refuses me, I am but where I was; but if he receives me, I am abundantly better:

Return'd to his Father's House. 9

better: It is better to retract my Folly, and live, than obstinately to maintain my Post, and die miserable; there is some Hope this Way, but none at all the other: Therefore *jaeta est alea*, the Dye is cast, and I am resolv'd I will return.

Thus also it is with the penitent returning Sinner: Now (says he) *mine Eyes are open'd*; and tho' very late, yet now at last I see my Danger; and blessed be God that I see whither I was going, before the Case be utterly desperate: I am sure to perish for ever, if I continue my sinful Course; and therefore, whatever come on't, I will return. Whatever Discouragements for my Acceptance, my former Rebellion's set before me; or whatsoever Difficulty there may be for an old *habituated Sinner* to change his Byass, I am resolved however, not to perish foolishly, with my Hands folded up in my Bosom: No, I will arise and go to my Father; I will try whether he will refuse me or not.

3. This Resolution is followed by Execution, and actual Returning: He is

is not like the Son that said, *I go, Sir,* but never went, but he arose, and went to his *Father*. He that considers, and comes to no *Resolution*, is like the Man that plows the Ground, and sows nothing upon it: And he that resolves, but executes not, is yet more sottish; for he is at all the Cost, and takes all the Pains, and reaps no Fruit of his *Labours*. There is such a near Connexion between *Consideration*, *Resolution*, and *Execution*, and they are so naturally consequent upon one another, that as on the one side *Consideration* brings on *Resolution*, and that, *Practice*; so much more on the other, from a Man's *Practice*, we may ordinarily pronounce his *Resolutions*, and from that certainly calculate his *Meditations*. But the Prodigal he comes to this Point; I have delay'd too long already; I may consider, and make *Resolutions*, and yet sit to starve: It must be doing must rescue me from my *Misery*: And so he arose, and so doth the true returning Penitent: He out of hand closes with the blessed Jesus upon his own, that is upon Gospel-Terms.

But

But before we proceed, let us further oblerve, That the Prodigal's Repentance is here term'd, a Coming to himself; as if he had been out of his Wits before, as I have in part already touch'd upon; and from whence this Doctrin fairly offers it self, That a Man in his Sins is out of his Senses, a meer Madman, and out of his Wits. Sinners are *Bedlams* and *Lunaticks*, void of *Sense* and *Reason*. Add therefore those forequoted Words of the Prophets, *Isa. xlv. 8. Remember this, and shew yourselves Men; bring it again to Mind, O ye Transgressors, may be better render'd, Return to your Mind, O ye Transgressors, or, Return into your Hearts,* as *Calvin* reads them, making this very Note from thence, That they were not well in their Wits before: To which agrees *Musculus Mentzerus*, with many others. And indeed the Words usually used for Repentance, both in the *Greek* and *Latin*, shew as much; for the *Greek* Word is derived of another, which signifieth *Folly* and *Madness*, and is as much as *After-wit*. And for the *Latin* Word, the Prophet in the former place cited, seemeth

seemeth to give the Signification of it : And it is no wonder, for their Reason and Judgment are now corrupted thro' Sin ; so that as our Blessed Saviour said, *They know not what they do.* And is it not the very Definition of a Mad-man, to be without Judgment, to follow his Fancy, and to be led by Appearances without Trial? Thus it is said, *Luke vi. 11. They were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.*

Now let the Uses of the Point be these: First, It may inform our Judgments concerning Sin and Sinners : Sin is Madness, and Sinners are Lunaticks, being possess'd with a Spiritual Frenzy and Madness. And if we do but behold 'em with a spiritual Eye, their Actions will declare it: Some run to and fro stark-naked, and blush not the tear off, and cast away the Graments of Holiness and Innocency : *Were they ashamed,* saith *Jeremiah?* *Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither did they blush,* *Isai. vi. 15.* Are Men ashamed of their flagitious Courses, which lay them naked both to Shame and Judgment? Alas !

Alas! they are so far from it, that they Glory in them, never blushing for the committing of them. Others, (tho' sometimes they keep within Compass, and seem to be well govern'd, as if they were no such Men, for all Men are not always a like mad, yet) being a little displeas'd, are but in the least cross'd strait fall a playing of their mad Pranks, raging and raving against Heaven and Earth, cursing and banning all that speak to them, and imprecating the Divine Majesty to bring Damnation on their own Heads, infecting the very Air with their leud Speeches, and execrable Oaths, as if they would pluck Omnipotence out of his Throne, and crucifie the Saviour of the World afresh, And would any but Mad-men act at such a rate? Others again foam at the Mouth; their talk is idle and beastly, favouring neither of Wit nor Honesty; the very Sparkles of Hell come forth from their Lips, whereat the Devil kindles the Fire of Dissension. And is not this a plain Indication that they are Mad-men? But again, how deeply are others possess'd with

with the Spirit of Madness, who are never well, but when they are wounding, beating and destroying themselves and others, wasting their Estates, consuming their Bodies, and pitifully flashing of their Consciences and Souls; yea, killing and destroying, whoever they keep Company with, drawing them into the same Excess of Riot, that so they may all perish together. In a Word, what mad Property is to be seen in a *Bedlamite*, that is not to be found in a wicked Man? O happy were it, if the Rod of Discipline were better used; for then there wou'd be Hope of more Sobriety.

But, 2. Is this so, that every Sinner is a *Lunatick*? Let it then admonish all such as are well in their Wits, to keep out of such Company. Men bodily mad are kept bound and chained, and narrowly watched over, that they cannot hurt, and yet we are loth to come within their Reach: But we never fear those Spiritual *Bedtams*, of whom we ought to be most wary, being they are at Liberty in every Place and House, in most Companies, and

ma-

many times have Power to hurt; and yet the more is the Pity, How careless are we of our selves? O! be more careful, you that love your selves, and see that you come not in their Company, nor receive them into your Houses, unless Necessity compel: What tho' they keep within Compass for a time? In some Months, Mad-men seem sober; yet first or last they will have their Fits, and may much endanger your Souls and Bodies.

The last Use shall be un Exhortation to such as are yet in the State of Nature, to pity and pray themselves, that they may have their Senses restor'd to them. When thou seest a *Lunatick* to rage and rave, to rend and tear his Hair and Flesh, thou canst not but pity and send forth a Prayer for him, that God would keep him. Behold, O Man! thine own Estate, such an one art thou, void of all *Sense* and *Spiritual Understanding*, who dost daily wound thine own Soul by Sin: Be as merciful to thy self, as thou art to others; bewail thine own fearful State; cry to God for help and redness; never give over

over till thou art brought to thy self; and being once cured, commiserate the Estate of others that are not. Turn not their mad Pranks into Jest, as most do; but turn to God by Prayer for their Recovery, as but few do.

But let us now, in the next place, see what are the Considerations the *Prodigal* entertains his thoughts upon, in this his afflicted Condition: And we shall find them reducable to these following Heads.

I. He considers what the Condition was he is fallen from, and how happy he might have been, had it not been for his own folly: *How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough, &c.* And if he had said, I that now am pinch'd with Want, found none in my *Father's House*; there I was liberally Maintain'd, honourably Treated, wanted nothing but Wisdom to understand my own Felicity; and in this Condition I might have continued; for neither did my Father's Estate complain of the Burden of my Accommodations, nor was he strait-handed, or abated any thing of his *Fatherly Affection* towards

wards me: It was nothing but my own Folly ruin'd me. And then he proceeds.

2. To deplore the sad Estate he was fallen into: When I set out from my *Father's House* in quest of Liberty, did I ever dream of becoming a Slave? When I despised the liberal Provisions of his Family, did I, or could I have thought I should come to want Bread, to feed upon Husks? How sad is the Change! How severe is my Fate! which I know no more how to bear, then how to avoid. But this is not the worst yet: For,

3. He fore-thinks what is like to be the Issue of this: Is it not only feeding upon Husks, but *I perish for Hunger*: I have a Prospect of nothing but Death before me, in the Case I am in. I am lost and undone; undone in the most dreadful Circumstances; I not only perish, but it is with Hunger: Death makes his sure Approaches; and that in a most ghastly Shape; *Vivens vidensque perco*, I see and feel my self dying.

4. But yet in the last place, he looks about

about him, to see if there be not some way to Escape. I am dying (*saith he*) but not quite dead; whilst there is Life, there is Hope; who will not catch hold of any thing, rather than perish? And it agrees not with my Condition to stick at any thing that can afford me the least Probability of Safety. Am not I a Son, tho' I am here a Slave? Have not I a Father? And hath he not Pity? Why then do I stand still and die, and not rather make the utmost Experiment?

And here we may suppose the Prodigal thus Arguing with himself: Woe and alas is me! This miserable Life, (as miserable as it is) cannot last always; Death will arrest me shortly, and present me before a just Tribunal: The Grave will ere long cover me, but not be able to conceal me; for I must come to Judgment. Methinks I have already the Sound of the last Trumpet, *Let the Dead arise, let them come to Judgment*: I see the Angels as Apparators, gathering all the World together, and presenting them before that dreadful Tribunal. How shall I be able with my guilty

guilty Conscience to appear upon that
huge Theatre before God, Angels, and
Men? Methinks I see the Devil stand-
ing at my Right Hand, to aggravate
those Faults which he promoted me to
the Commission of. I beheld the Books
opened, and all the Debaucheries, Ex-
travagancies and Follies of my whole
Life laid open: *Christ, the Judge of all*
the World, coming in flaming Fire, to take
Vengeance upon them that have not known
him, nor obeyed his Gospel. How shall I
endure his Presence? How shall I
escape his Eye? I cannot delude his
Judgment, nor evade his Sentence:-
Come then, ye Rocks, and fall upon me,
and ye Mountains cover me from the Face
of the Lamb, and from him that sitteth up-
on the Throne. But the Rocks rend in
funder, the Sea and the Earth disclose
their Dead, the Earth dissolves, the
Heavens vanish as a Scroll, and I hear
the dreadful Sentence, *Depart ye Cursed*
into everlasting Fire, prepared for the De-
vil and his Angels. Methinks I hear
Christ Jesus thus upbraiding me: You
hav listned to the Devil, and not
to me; I would have saved you,

but you would not be ruled by me; you have chosen the way of Death now, therefore ye shall be filled with your own Ways. I forewarned you what would be the Issue of your Courses, but you would have your full Swing of Pleasure for the present, whatever become of it hereafter: You made a Jest of Judgment, but it is come in Earnest: You have had your Time of Jollity and Sensual Transports, and now your Portion is Weeping and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth.

But is there no Hope left? Must I lie down thus in Sorrow and Despair? These Things I must justly expect, but they are not yet incumbent upon me. I have heard God is a Merciful God, and thereupon I presum'd hitherto, and abused his Goodness; but sure his *Mercies* are above the *Measure* of a Man, if they be infinite like Himself; He hath more Goodness than I have Ingratitude. Possibly there may be some *Hopes* left, in the midst of all these *Calamities*, If there be none, it is in vain to repent, fruitless to weep, endless to bewail, Madness to add to my own
In-

Infelicities: If there be an Irrevocable Decree past upon me, I will curse God and die. But sure whilst there is a God, there must be Goodness; his Name speaks his Nature. Will he break a bruised Reed? Will he contend with Dust and Ashes? It is true, he hath no Need of me; but for the same Reason he cannot delight in my Misery: He cannot repent and Change his Mind, because his Wisdom foresaw from the *Beginning* all possible Contingencies. But if I repent, and change my Mind, the same *Unchangeableness* of his, will oblige him as well then to save me, as before to destroy me. How far he will extend Mercy, and what Instances he will make of it, I cannot define: But who knows but he may yet admit of my Submission! However I cannot be worse than I am; and it is possible my Condition may be better. Here I perish certainly; and if I cast my self upon his Goodness, I can but perish; therefore I will try, I will arise and go to my Father. Thus his Deliberation brings him to Resolution, which is the Second Stage of Repen-

tance. But so much shall suffice for this time.

SERMON II.

Luke xv. 18.

I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee:

And am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired Servants.

IN the former Verse (of which we have already spoken) we have this *Prodigal* in his deep *Meditations*: comparing Things together, and weighing them in the *Ballance*: But behold, whilst he mused, the Fire kindled in his Bosom, and now he speaks, *I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned, &c.* In the Words three Things are especially to be observed: *First*, what he resolves to do, *I will arise and go.* *Secondly*, To whom

whom he will go; *I will go to my Father. Thirdly, What he will say when he comes thither. Father I have sinned, &c.*

It was high Time for the *Prodigal* to think of returning to his Father, when he was *Perishing* by his Disobedience; and had no farther, nor no other *Refuge*, but in his Father's Clemency; and sure it is time for the Sinner to Repent, and Return to God, when (*if he be sensible of any thing*) he cannot but be apprehensive that in the Course he is in, the *Danger* of his Eternal Ruin is as certainly impendent, as it is more intolerable. But to come to the Particulars:

First, We are to consider what he resolves to do. *I will, saith he, arise and go, &c.* There is a *Three fold Resurrection of a Christian*. *First*, sacramental, and so we arise again in Baptism. *The Second* is Corporeal; and so we shall rise again in the Day of our Lord Jesus in our Bodies from the Grave. *The Third* is Spiritual, which is his Resurrection in this Life in Soul from the Death of Sin. Thus did this *Prodigal* arise, and thus doth every true *Penitent* arise, while he here liveth

on the Earth; from whence we may observe.

That Repentance from Sin, is as a Resurrection from Death: Which is further confirmed by the Apostle's Words: Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.

And if this be so, then Repentance is no such easy Matter as the World takes it to be. The Work of Repentance is no less miraculous than the rising of the Dead. It is a Work that cannot be wrought by the Power of Nature, but such a Work as must be wrought by the mighty Power of God.

But, 2. A Second Use shall be, to stir us all up thus to arise: For if the Soul while it is in the Body, arise not out of the Grave of Sin, sure it is, the Body shall never rise out of the Earth but to Shame and Confusion. Use all good Means therefore, that thou mayest have thy Part in this first Resurrection from Sin to grace, that the second Death may have no Power on thee; for otherwise it is impossible to escape the Power of it. By no means canst thou escape the Torment of Hell, if thou dost not here
awake,

awake, and stand up from the Dead, and with *Lazarus* come forth. But to proceed,

And go.] It was a good and holy *Motion* which he had of *Arising*. This he doth not quench, but cherishes and nourishes it: He adds more Fuel to this Fire begun, tho' but a Spark. To the good *Motion* of *Arising*, he adds the second of *Going*, which is a moving forward: When we once begin in the Way of Godliness, there must be a *Progression*, a continual *going forward*. The good *Motions* of God's blessed Spirit, at any time, in any measure, (tho' never so *weak*) being once begun, are not to be choak'd, but to be cherish'd. When the Lord shall put any good *Motion* into our *Hearts*, we are to *nourish* and *cherish* the same. To one good *Motion* we must add a second, and to that a third, and to 'em many more, and so fall to blowing, and not give over, until at length they break out into a comfortable *Flame* of serious and practical Godliness.

And this serveth as a Use of Reproof to condemn them that nip the *Bud* as soon as ever it peeps forth; and quench

every Spark of good that any time appeareth; yea, they wilfully set themselves to expel all good *Motions*, hastening to their wicked Companions, to chace away what they prophanely call Qualms of *Devotion*, which are indeed the sweet Inspirations of the Holy Spirit of God. Thus some will have some kind of Remorse wrought in them, sometimes upon the Hearing of a Sermon, and they seem to be much griev'd and perplex'd for a while; but they soon quench this Grief, as not being willing to torment themselves before the times, and therefore run into what they call merry (that is *wicked* and *vain*) Company, and there *drink down Sorrow*, as not being willing to be overmuch disquieted with this Melancholy; and so by quenching of those good *Motions* lose their Souls.

Let us therefore in the next place, be all of us admonished to take heed how we suffer that blessed Heat to slack and grow cold, which by God's Grace begins to be *kindled in our Hearts*: Suffer we not that Coal, that holy *Motion* which the Lord hath cast into our Bosoms,

Bosoms, to die within us, but blow it up, lay no more Fewel, and daily more and more *Matter to it*, and let us tremble to lose the least Measure of God's gracious Gifts. To that end let us be frequent in Spiritual Exercises, as in Hearing, Reading, Meditation: Christian Conferences, Prayer, and the like. Let no Means be neglected that God hath ordained for the working of our Establishment.

But from these Words [*I will arise and go*] a *Second Doctrine* may be gather'd; which is this: Where *Spiritual Life* and a new Birth is once begun, there will be a Growth and an Increase of Grace. There will be no standing at a Stay, but a proceeding forward by Degrees.

And this may *serve very well* for every one of us to examine ourselves by, and see what *Growth* of Grace there is in us, what Increase of Faith, Love, Patience, Zeal, and what strengthening of the inner Man Grace doth beget every Day more than other, till it grow to some *Bigness*? Doth it shoot up in Tallness and Stature? Surely then it is out of question that Grace is true Grace, and that

thou art made Partaker of the New Birth. But doth it remain still Infant-like and feeble, without any stirring or shewing of it self; then hast thou cause to fear it is but a Counterfeit, and not true Grace indeed: The Withering of the Blade, is a shrew'd Sign of a Stony Ground.

This may also serve to reprove such as stand at a stay, and do not go forward, but are like the *George* on Horseback, ever riding, but are not a Step further: Where you leavethem this Year, there you may find 'em the next. This is a fearful and most uncomfortable Thing.

In the Third Place, let this admonish every one to grow in Grace. Let us forget that which is behind, and press forward to that which is before, *Let us press forward toward the Mark, for the Prize of the High Calling of G O D in Christ Jesus.* Let us not be evermore as smoaking Flax, or as bruised Reeds; but let the Flame of our *Warmth* to God break forth into a compleat Victory over all our Corruption.

Observe we next whom it is that this *Prodigal* addresses himself to in his Return.

turn home: And that is his Father.

I will arise and go to my Father.] From which we may learn, that Relief in any sad and deplorable Condition is to be sought for from G O D alone. Therefore this sharply reproves those that betake themselves to any other Help in time of Trouble or Adversity; for our Help is in the Lord, for vain is the Help of Man: For to appeal to Saints or Angels, or use or any other unlawful means for our *Deliverance*, is very bad. This was King *Abaziab's* Sin, who being sick, sent *Messengers*, and said unto 'em, *Go and enquire of Baal-zebub, the God of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this Disease?* Contrary to the Command of God, *Regard not them that have familiar Spirits, neither seek after Wizards to be defiled by them, I am the Lord your God.*

Secondly, Let this teach Us, who have any regard for the Welfare of our precious and immortal Souls, to seek to him that is mighty, and able to save to the utmost all that come to G O D by him, from the Miseries of this Life, and the Torments of the next; and beware of trusting to any other *Means* that God has

appointed: It is lawful to seek to the Physician, and to make use of his Means, but to trust to the Physician's Help more than in God, is very dangerous and sinful.

And say unto him Father.] The Prodigal there doth consider what he should say, when he comes into his Father's Presence; for as yet he was not. From whose Example we ought to learn to be very careful how we approach or come into God's Presence, who is *Maker* of Heaven and Earth, without a due Preparation, and consider well what to say, what to seek, and what you want before you speak.

Be not rash (says the wise Man) *with thy Mouth, and let not thy Heart be hasty to utter any Thing before God.* We must confer with our Hearts, or commune with them, and prepare them fit for God's Service, before we presume to come into his Presence. To this doth the Prophet *Hosea* seem to exhort us, *Take to your Words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him.* And so our Saviour in his Direction for Prayers sets not down the Petitions abrupt, but beginneth with a solemn Preface,

Preface, to shew before we enter upon this great and important Duty, we must dispose ourselves, and compose our *Affections* for the same, as the *Psalmist* hath it, *Pf. 108. ver. 1. O God my Heart is fixed, I will sing and give Praise unto thee with my Glory.* And again, *Psa. 57. My Heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise unto thee.*

And the Reason why we humble ourselves so, when we come before the Most High; for as *Solomon* saith, *God is in Heaven*, and if he should say, *God is full of Majesty and Wisdom*; God is both Lord and Judge, it is not a Man, or any earthly Power you have to do with, but that great and glorious God, who hath the Angels to attend him, and a Thousand times Ten Thousand administering unto him, at whose Feet all the Kings of the Earth cast down their *Crowns* and *Scepters*: And we are upon the Earth weak and unwise, and unworthy Creatures, less than nothing before him, who fills *Heaven and Earth*; therefore it becomes us not to speak unto him, but with the greatest Fear, Reverence and Respect imaginable. And this serves to reprove many who rush into God's Presence without

without any Preparation at all, or due Meditation of what they are to ask or crave at his Hand. Small is the Number of such as do pray, but far smaller, I doubt, is the Number of them that prepare themselves a-right for Prayer.

And also this should admonish us to prepare our selves before we come to appear before the Lord, to call upon his Name, whether in Publick or Private. You know good and stately Buildings have, to be sure, a *magnificent* Gate or Entrance; and Great Persons have seemly Ushers to go before them, who by their uncovered Heads command Reverence and Way. So should holy Duties be undertaken, you may see. *Exod. 19. 10, 11. The Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the People, and sanctify 'em to Day and to Morrow: Let 'em wash their Cloaths, and be ready against the third Day; for on the Third Day the Lord will come down in the Sight of all the People in Mount Sinai.* So much for that Point.

Now we are to speak of the Words themselves, which he without doubt did not speak, without great Consideration.

Father, I have sinned, &c.] In these Words

Words of his *Acknowledgment* we may see more especially what troubled him most, and touched him to the *Quick*, (namely this) that he had so grossly abus'd the great Love and Kindness of so good and so tender a Father. It was his Sensibleness of his Ingratitude, made him insist so much upon the *Name (of Father,)* *I will go to my Father ; I have sinned against Heaven, and against Thee.* The Miseries he was in, as his want of Bread, and all the rest of the Comforts of this Life, doubtless to Him was very sad and grievous ; yet all this was not so great a Trouble to him. or lay so heavy upon his Spirit, as his Undutifulness to so gracious and good a Father.

Let us note this by the way, That *nothing* lies so heavy upon a true Penitent that is thoroughly convicted, as this, That he hath been so great an *Offender*, and Rebel against so good a *GOD*, so gracious a *Father*, that gives, of his infinite *Goodness* and *Bounty*, all that he doth enjoy, or desire to enjoy.

This was that which most troubled *David*, and went nearest to his Heart, that he had sinned against the *LORD*,
and

and offended his Majesty, by committing of Evil : *Against thee only have I sinned, and done this Evil in thy sight.*

The Reason of this the Apostle St. Paul giveth, *They have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but they have received the Spirit of Adoption: which Spirit doth make them love the Lord, and fear to offend, and exceedingly grieve when he is offended ; as it is with a true Lover towards his Beloved.*

Now for some Use.

First, We may see a great Difference between the Sorrow of the Godly and that of the Wicked ; both grieve, both mourn ; Ahab as well as David ; Judas as well as Peter ; yet the Sorrow of the one is godly, and bringeth Life ; the Sorrow of the other worldly, and bringeth Death.

Therefore for your further Information, if you do truly grieve as you ought, it will be thus : *First, You will grieve for all your Sins, Original and Actual ; of Ignorance and Knowledge ; of Omision and Commission, and Secret, and Open, for little Sins as well as for great : Whatsoever is Sin you will*
mourn

mourn for, because God's Law is broken by it, and his Majesty offended.

Secondly, If you grieve because God is offended, then will you grieve also for the Sins of others as well as for your own, because God is dishonoured by the one as well as by the other.

Thirdly, If your Sorrow for Sin be a true Sorrow, it will be a Sorrow proportionable to your Sin, as we may see in *Manasseh's*, his Sin was great, and so was his Contrition, 2 Chron. 33. 12. And when he was in Affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Father, and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him, and heard his Supplications, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his Kingdom: Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. So in *Peter*, his Sorrow was great for denying his Master, Matth. 26. 75. And Peter remembered the Words of Jesus, which said unto him, before the Cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice: And he went out and wept bitterly.

Fourthly, If your Sorrow be godly for Sin, as it is an offence to God, you will

will desire them to be rid of Sin more than any other Trouble whatever; yea, as heartily desirous never to commit it, as you would be desirous that God should never impute it.

Furthermore, this may serve to reprove those who rest in a counterfeit and unsound Repentance, who do not return to the Lord with all their Hearts. For doth a true Penitent grieve more for God's Cause than his own? Is he more grieved for the offence against God, than for any manner of Respect to himself? Then surely such must be far from true Repentance, who, were it not for Fear, or Shame, would be content to live in Sin, and take *Pleasure* in it all their Days.

But to proceed, [*And before thee*] that is, in thy sight, as afterward, v. 21. This did add much to this Prodigal's Sorrow, and did much aggravate his Faults. Two things are here observable: First, That God's Eye is on all Men's Actions. The second is, The forgetting of God's *All-seeing*, when we are committing of *Evil*, doth aggravate the Sin, and increase the same. First, God is every where present, he can be shut out of no Place, as
Man

Man can, or the Sun may ; because of his Immenfity : *Do not I fill Heaven and Earth ? faith the Lord : Am I a GOD at hand, and not a far off ?* Therefore it cannot otherwise be, he muſt needs behold all our Actions, as you may ſee in the 139th *Psalm*, and 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12th Verſes, *Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit, or whether ſhall I flee from thy Preſence ? If I aſcend up to Heaven, thou art there ? If I make my Bed in Hell behold thou art there ; If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea, even there ſhall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand ſhall hold me ; if I ſay ſurely the Darkneſs ſhall cover me, even the Night ſhall be light about me ; yea, the Darkneſs hideth not from thee, but the Night ſhineth as the Day, the Darkneſs and Light are both alike to thee.*

Secondly, It is He that made the Eye, and ſhall he not ſee ? And he that made the Ear, and ſhall he not hear ? He giveth Knowledge, and ſhall he not know ? Can any thing be hid from him from whom they have their Being ? The Work is known unto the Worker. the Art unto the Artificer, the Pot unto the Potter, and ſhall not the Creature be known by his Creator ? It

It is he that chastiseth the Nation, as the Prophet speaks ; shall not he correct ? He is our Judge, and every one shall be judged by him according to his Works. Now altho' he shall not want Witnesses in that great and terrible Day, yet it is fitting he should have Knowledge of all Men's Actions, seeing he will not reprove after the Hearing of his Ears, Isa. 11. 2, 3. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and of the Fear of the Lord ; and shall make him of quick Understanding in the Fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his Eye.

These few Reasons may suffice. Now for some Uses.

Use the First. This may serve for Terror to all those that boldly go on and live in Sin, that have not God in all their Thoughts, that desire not the Knowledge of his Ways. And if the Righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the Wicked and the Ungodly appear ? They must call to the Rocks and Mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the dreadful Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory

Glory of his Majesty, when he comes to shake terribly the Earth. What greater Terror can it be to the Wicked, than for the Lord to see know, and take Cognizance of all their wicked Doings. Oh! think of these Things, you that lurk in Dens to do Mischief, you Enemies of the Church, whose sleep departs from you, till you have caused some to fall. The Lord seeth your Plots and cunning Devices against his Church and People: But he that sitteth in the Heaven shall laugh you to scorn, the Lord shall have you in Derision.

Take notice of this you Whoremongers and Adulterers, who say in your Hearts, *Who seeth us? We are compassed about with Darknesse*, we need not fear. Behold the Lord thy Judge seeth thy Villany, and looketh thee in the Face in the very Act doing.

Use Second. This serveth to set forth God's wonderful Patience and Long-suffering: Is all Sin in his Eye? Can nothing be done upon Earth but he sees or knows it? Then let us magnify God's infinite Mercy and Forbearance, who seeing so many and outrageous Sins daily committed

mitted against his Honour and Glory, and yet for all that, spare us ? Some swearing, some cheating, some lying, some whoring, some thieving, and what not, and his Eye upon 'em all the time ? All our *Impurities* and *Impieties* he plainly doth behold, yet he forbears, and doth not strike ; designing by this his gracious Favour, to move us to Repentance.

Use the Third. This may serve to stir us up, and encourage us in *Well-doing*, for he is a good Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. What lazy Servant will not do his best, and put forth his Strength to the utmost, when his Master's Eye is upon him ? So, who is he, that being fully persuaded that the Lord sees all his *Doings*, would not put forth the best of his *Strength* to the Work of the Lord, and serve him with all his Heart, and all his Mind, with all his Soul, and with all his Strength ; knowing also the greatest Rewards that are promised those, whose Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither can it enter into the Heart of Man, to conceive what God has prepared for all those that love him, and long for his Appearing ?

Ano-

Another Doctrine to be learned from hence, is this: That the forgetting of God's *All-seeing Eye*, when committing of Evil, doth *aggravate the Sin*, and increase the Shame, And the Reasons are these: *First*, We Sin against those Means that ought to keep us from Sin, and this doth *aggravate the Sin* exceedingly, and make Sin out of Measure sinful. *Secondly*, We rob God of his Honour, and give not that unto him which is his Right; we would pluck out his Eyes, that he should not see, or at least as bad, think him to be blind; to think God seeth us not, is a kind of Atheism, for in a manner we deny him to be God.

And am no more worthy to be called thy Son.] In which Words you may plainly see, what a good Resolution he had made to humble himself, when he came to his Father; says he, I am not worthy to be thy Son, nay, not of the Name of a Son; *make me as one of thy hired Servants*, and I shall think my self most happy. O rare and excellent Humility! because greatly necessary, because God is good to such, and only such as are truly

truly humble before him, but as for the Proud, he beholds them with an Eye of Scorn afar off.

But come to the Point, and this it is, Where there is a true, hearty, and sincere *Repentance*, as may never be repented of ; there is a *Sight and Sense* of a Man's own Unworthiness : And it stands with *good Reason*, for the Affection must needs follow the Temperature of the Mind ; so that as the Conceit of *Holiness* and *Happiness* doth puff a Man up with *Spiritual Pride* ; so a true *Sight and Sense* of his sinful *State and Condition*, must needs cast him down with Shame and Sorrow.

Let us then examine our Repentance by our Humility. *Hast thou truly repented ?* Then thou art truly humbled with a *Sight and Sense* of thy Sins and Transgressions. And it is sadly to be lamented and feared, that there is but little true Repentance amongst the Sons of Men, since there is so little Humiliation for Sin.

This may serve to reprove those that have not this low and mean Esteem of themselves, but think better of themselves

selves then they ought : Let all such know that they have received the *Grace of God* in vain ; *And behold*, says the Prophet, *his Soul that is lifted up is not upright within him.* All those that are not cloathed with Humility, are far from Uprightness ; the higher the Sun, the shorter the Shadow ; the emptiest Vessel ever sounds loudest ; Wood that is burning makes the greatest Smoak, commonly gives the smallest Heat. Those Boughs which are most laden with Fruit, and those Ears that are fullest of Corn, do ever bend downwards ; when the barren Bough and empty Ear stand upright. So those that make not a right and good Use of that measure of Grace that God has given them, are oftentimes spiritually proud, and boast most of their Goodness.

But says the poor, *Prodigal*, *Make me as one of thy hired Servants* ; as if he had said, I will not presume, I dare not desire to be as before I was : A Son ! No, I am unworthy of so great a Favour : Yet, I beseech thee, grant me this Favour, that I may be as one of thy hired Servants ; let me be any thing, so

I may have but Room and Place in thy House, if it be but as the meanest Servant. Here we may see how the Case is altered: When he was in the House before, he was a Son, then nothing was too good for him; but since he has been in a far Country, and wanted those good Things his Father's Servants did enjoy, his Heart and his Desires are changed; now let him but be one of the lowest of his Servants, and he will think himself very happy.

From hence we may learn, That God's Blessings are better known, and more esteemed by the wanting of them than by enjoying of them; the Worth and Excellency of God's good Blessings are not known unto us till we are without them. Thus Vision was precious in the Days of *Eli*; and the Prophet *Isaiah* tells the People of *Israel*, That the Blessings of the *L O R D* should be excellent and pleasant to them, after they had been pinched with the want of them in their Captivity; Yea the Bud shall then be beautiful, &c.

The Use of this (in a Word) is to teach us to esteem more the Blessings
we

we receive from God, and beware of undervaluing them, lest we give the Lord occasion to deprive us of them. These common Blessings of the shining of the Sun, breathing in the Air, *Meat, Drink, Apparel, Preservation* in our goings out and comings in, the use of our *Sense, Health of Body*, and the like, let them be more esteemed by us, and let us always have thankful Hearts for 'em. Alas! how miserable should we be without these Comforts! The Lord is obliged sometimes, (so great is his Mercy and our Corruption) for our Good to with-hold some of these Comforts from us, that we might know the Usefulness and Excellency of them by the Want of them; as Hunger is good Sauce and gives a good Flavour and Relish to course Meats and homely Fair, when as the full Soul loaths the Honey and the Honey-comb. When we want *Health, Strength, Sense or Sleep* for some time, O how precious and good are they to us, when God out of his infinite Mercy is pleased to restore them to us again! Oh how joyful of them and thankful for them are we?

And he arose and came to his Father, &c. This *Prodigal* puts in practice what he just before had resolved to do: Wherein we have the two Parts of *Repentance*; First, his Aversion from Sin, *He arose*. Secondly, his Conversion to God, *And came to his Father*. His arising is nothing else but his leaving of Sin; and his coming to his Father, his turning to the Lord. From whence we may note, where there is true Repentance, there is a rising from Sin, there is a leaving and forsaking all former evil Ways, and wicked Courses: This is plainly seen in many Instances in Scripture; as in *St. Paul*, *St. Peter*, *Zaccheus*, and many others, who left their evil Ways, to cleave only to that which was good.

First, Hereby we may know whether our Repentance be real, or no: Hath it wrought a thorough Change in the Affections, Words and Actions? Are all old things done away, and new come in the Place thereof? Is there a forsaking of Sin, a thorough Reformation of Life? If it be thus, then it is well with thee; for thus it is with every true Penitent.

Secondly,

Secondly This may serve for Terror to such as find not this Change in themselves, for where this is wanting, there can be no true Repentance, but you are the same as ever you were; it cannot be said of you as St. Paul said of the *Corinthians*, *Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c.* but such are you, and so continue unchanged; Adulterers, Drunkards, Covetous ye were, and are so still; you are as profane, as proudly, as worldly, as irreligious as ever, if not worse than ever.

Thirdly, This may serve for Comfort to all such as do find this blessed Change wrought in them. They are turned from *Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*: Who can say as that blind Man that had his Sight restored? *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see*: Whereas I was unclean and filthy, I am now washed and purified. O happy Estate, and blessed Condition that thou art in! Only let me admonish thee to manifest thy Change also to the World; that they seeing thy good Works, may glorifie thy Heavenly Father,

ther, that has wrought this Change in thee. St. *Ambrose* reports of a young Man, who had lived in the Practice of gratifying his Lusts, and had committed many heinous Sins; but afterwards was converted in his Travels; and returning home, he met with one of his old Acquaintance, with whom he had been very often over familiar: He passed by, and made as if he did not see her. She wondring that he so slighted her, went to him, and said, *How now! What, have you forgotten me? It is I. I know it,* said he, *but I am not I? I am not the Man I was, therefore I have nothing to say to you or do with you.* So it becomes all true Converts, to shew forth in their Life and Conversation that Change, which it has pleased God to work in them: that those who were Witnesses of their Sin may be also Witnesses of Repentance.

How then are they to be condemn'd, who, tho' they own that there must be such a Change and Turning, yet turn from bad to worse, from one Sin to another? For Instance, many turn from Profuseness and Prodigality to Covetousness

ousness, from swearing to cheating and cozening, from *Atheism* and Profaneness to Superstition; what Hope can these have, who are so far from true Repentance? This highly concerns those who were (at least seem'd) once zealous in carrying on the *Work of the Lord*, to the Edification of others, but are now become Backsliders and Apostates, Let them attentively hearken to the Admonition given to the Church at *Ephesus*, *Rev. 2. 5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first Works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Let this also warn us all, that our Turning be a true Turning; and as with this *Prodigal* we have gone by Sin from our Father's House, so let us arise, and with him set our Faces Heavenward, This *Prodigal* after he had once made a Resolution, stands not debating, but forthwith he arose and went his way. When he had received the Call of God in his Conscience, he does not consult Flesh and Blood, but obeys immediately the heavenly Voice. By this we may

see that the Work of Repentance must be set about without Delay ; we must set about it in good earnest, as soon as ever God touches our Hearts with a Coal from his Altar. God ever requires the First Fruits, he must be served above and before all. Then let this reprove the great Folly and Madness of those that defer their Repentance from Day to Day. There are often called to return and repent, and they have many Opportunities put into their Hands, if they had but an heart to embrace them: But alas ! instead of this they often say, I have time enough to repent : Why tell you me of Repentance as yet ? Is not God merciful ? Did not he shew Mercy to the Thief on the Cross at the last Hour ? Do not we read of some that were called at the Eleventh Hour, who were rewarded with the same Penny with those that were hired at the Third Hour, and had born the Heat and Burthen of the Day : And with such kind of Arguments they strengthen themselves against all the Calls and Monitions they meet with from God, either in his Word or Providence. But
it

it would much better become them, to reflect upon the uncertainty of Life, and the shortness of it at best : That tho' God had been graciously pleased to promise Pardon to returning Sinners, yet he will have no Mercy on presuming Sinners : That the Instance of the Thief on the Cross, is but a single Example, given (probable) only to keep Men from Despair, and so ought not to be drawn into Precedent : And that the Parable of those that were hired at the sixth and ninth, and eleventh Hours, signifies no more than that those who never before heard the Call of the Gospel shall be accepted even in very old Age, toward the latter End of their Life, if then they take upon them the Profession of Christianity, and conform their Practice to the Rules thereof. So that there is no Reason why they should any longer put off their Repentance and turning to God.

But when he was yet a great way off, he saw him.] Altho' this is put here in the last place, it is supposed by most of our Expositors, that it was the first Mover, and refers to the beginning of his Conversion

version. It was this gracious Look when he was yet afar off; that brought this *Prodigal* home to his *Father*. He looked upon him with an Eye of Pity and Compassion, and infused him into secretly his Efficacious Grace, and pierc'd his Heart with the Beams of his Spirit, which so prevailed with him, that it brought him to Repentance: Thus it was with St. *Peter*, who after he had sinned by thrice denying his Lord, remained obdurate and impenitent, till by a Look, our Saviour penetrated his Heart, and awakened him out of that Lethargick Fit; and then he went out and wept bitterly.

By this it appears, that the *Conversion* of a Sinner is an Effect of the Free Grace of God. By *Grace ye are saved*, was the Language of the *Holy Spirit*; and our Lord himself says, *No Man can come unto me except the Father draw him*. Many eminent Examples might be brought to confirm this, both of the *Unregenerate* before their *Conversion*, and the *Regenerate* in their Falls after *Conversion*. What Disposition was in St. *Paul* to farther his *Conversion*? Was he not breathing

breathing out *Threatnings* and *Slaughters* against the *People of God*, and the *Disciples of Jesu Christ*? Had he not procured a *Commission* from the *High Priest*, to bind and imprison all that were of that *Way*? Yet God beheld him afar off; as also he did *Matthew* at the Receipt of *Custom*, *Zaccheus* the *Usurer*, *Mary* the *Sinner*, and *Us Gentiles*, when we were, as *St. Paul* says, without *Hope*, without *God* in the *World*, *Strangers* to the *Covenant of Promise*, and *Aliens* to the *Commonwealth of Israel*. So that a *Sinner* may be aptly likened to an *Eccho*, he cannot speak first to *God*, but must answer to a *Voice* from *God*. And it cannot be otherwise, because we are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*, as the *Apostle* speaks: So the *Father* of this *Prodigal* says, *For this my Son was dead and is alive again*. Whilst we are *Unregenerate*, we have no *spiritual Life*, and can no more work our own *Conversion* than *Lazarus* could arise and come forth before *Christ* called him. This then may serve to check our *Pride*, and teach us not to ascribe that to our selves, which is the *Work of God alone*; let it humble us, and make

us to have mean Thoughts of ourselves. There is a strict Truth in those Words of our Saviour, *Without me ye can do nothing*, that is good and acceptable in the Sight of God: And if any one does any good thing, he may say as the Apostle, *Yet not I, but the Grace of God that dwelleth in me.* And if we have any good thing, it is nothing but what we have received from our gracious God, whether it appertaineth to this Life, or that which is to come.

Therefore let this oblige all of us, especially those who have any Signs and Tokens of their Conversion to the Lord, to give unto him the Praise and Glory that is due to him for the same; *Not unto us. O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the Glory; it is because of thy never failing Compassions, that we are not consumed.* It is of his infinite Mercy, not of our Deserts, that we are at this time living Monuments of his Patience and Forbearance. If we have repented and turned to God, what is the difference between us and Reprobates? Or at least, who made us to differ, but He that made us? Not from any foreseen good,
he

he did not find any good thing in us, but gave it us of his Free Grace and Bounty. How then should we be rapt up in Love to God on the consideration of his Love to us. Let us therefore take to ourselves Words and say, *Let the people praise thee, O God; yea let all the people praise thee: for thou alone art worthy of it; henceforth and for evermore.*

And ran.] Behold here the readiness of this Father to receive his penitent Child! The one cannot be more willing to return, than the other is to receive. So quick-sighted is Love, that he saw him a great way off; and seeing him, he did not stay till he came to him, but his Love adds Wings to his Feet, and Celerity to his Age, so that he ran to meet him. Hence we may learn, that God is always ready to receive returning and repenting Sinners, and shew Mercy to them; for his Mercy is over all his Works, and he is ever ready to forgive, as he is a God gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth himself of the Evil he had threatned.

For Man is God's Workmanship, and his Delight is with the Sons of Men ; therefore he is most ready and willing to receive all that forsake their Sins and seek him, and implore his Mercy : so that this may serve to encourage those who are even at the point of Despair ; for in him is infinite Mercy and plentiful Redemption.

And it is so? Have we so gracious and merciful a God to deal with, who is always ready to forgive every true Penitent? Then let none lay the Fault at God's Door if they perish in their Sins; for God is ready and desirous to forgive, as we may see by his Language in *Isaiah* 1. 16, 17, 18. where he reasons the Case with his People. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do evil. learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, Judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow. Come now and let us reason together, saith the LORD : Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be White as Snow ; tho' they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* God does often call upon us to turn from our evil Ways, that so Iniquity might

might not be our Ruin, but that we might be eternally blest with the Presence and Fruition of the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

Further, Seeing GOD is so ready to shew Mercy to every one that seeks it, let this be as a Spur or Goad in our sides to entreat him to forgive us our Sin: And certainly he will not be wanting to us, if we are not so to our selves. Let us also learn to be herein like our *Heavenly Father*, in being as ready to forgive Others as he is to forgive Us: It may be some-body has wrong'd us, or done us some great Injuries; yet we must forgive them, and that heartily too. Why then is there so much suing for Pardon and Reconciliation, before it can be obtained? We should remember that we pray to God to *forgive us our Trespases, as* (or on Condition, or in the same manner as) *we forgive them that trespass against us.*

Moreover, we find here the Son coming to submit himself to his Father, and the Father *running to receive and forgive his Son*; which teaches us, that God is more ready to shew Mercy, than penitent

tent Sinners are to sue for it: The one come *softly*, the other *swiftly*.

Here take notice of God's wonderful Love: who tho' he is the Party that is offended; yet is more ready to forgive than the offender to seek and beg Pardon!

And he fell on his Neck and kissed him. Here is a joyful Meeting between so good a Father and his Returning Son. Mercy and Truth are met together and kiss each other: Truth in the Prodigal, for he dissembled not; and Mercy in the Father, for he fell on his Neck and kissed him.

By these Circumstances the Heat and Fire of his Affection is declar'd, and his entire Love to his Son is express'd. A Kiss hath ever been esteemed as a Pawn or a Pledge of Kindness from him that kisseth, to him that is kissed. By this Token the primitive Christians used to express their Love to one another: Even till the time of *Justin Martyr*, it was in use before they approached the Table of the Lord, thereby testifying their hearty Love and Reconciliation one to another; and this (probably)

bably) was what we read of by the name of a *Holy Kiss*. Besides this, it was (and is to this Day) accounted a Ceremony of Civility and Affection: Thus *Joseph* when he blessed his Brethren, *fell on their Necks and kissed them*. Thus also *Judas* the Traitor made some shew of Kindness, when he kiss'd his Master, tho' he did it with a nefandous Intent to betray him. When the Church in the *Canticles* sues to her Spouse, to shew his Love to her, she intreats him to *kiss her with the kisses of his Mouth*. Thus the Father kissed his penitent Son, thereby sealing and confirming his good Will and Love towards him, so that he need not doubt of it. Answerable to this, God often does manifest his Love to his Children by evident Signs and Tokens, upon their Conversion and Turning to him. For were it not so, how could we be affected with it? What is a blind Man the better for knowing that the Sun is a glorious Creature, while he cannot see so much as one Beam of its Light? So, what is a Man benefitted by knowing that God is infinite in Love, except he also knows that he is a Person beloved by

by him, and has some feeling of it in his Soul.

If therefore it be true, that God does not only love his Children, but many times demonstrates his Love to them by Signs and Tokens, then we may see the Falshood of that Doctrine taught by the Church of *Rome*, That none can be certain that they are Objects of the Love and Favour of God: And tho' some may hope well, none can have a real Assurance.

This may also serve for the great Comfort and Establishment of those, that have *God's Love* manifested to them. For as great as the Trouble and Terror is wherewith that Man's Conscience is seized, who doubts of the Love and Favour of *Almighty God*; so great and much greater, is the Comfort wherewith that Man is possessed, who has attained to be a blessed Hope, and full Assurance of God's Love towards him. For then he is fitted for any Service God shall have for him to do in this World; for he is then capable of saying with the Apostle, *Rom 8. 38, 39. I am persuaded that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels,*

nor

nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But I must proceed to the next Verse.

And the Son said unto him, Father I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. Now we come more particularly to the Words which are a Confession of Sin, made by the Prodigal to his Father; wherein observe the Matter and the Manner of his Confession.

The Matter; *I have sinned*

The Manner; *against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*; which is a circumstantial Aggravation, and an Humiliation.

This may teach us, That God will not forgive Us our Sins, till we confess them. Thus we read in St. John i. 8, 9. *If we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves — But if we confess our Sins. God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

God has bound himself by his Word,
not

not to spare those who do not confess their Sins. So saith Solomon, *He that hideth the Sins shall not prosper : But whose confesseth and forsaken them shall have Mercy.*

But this it appears that all who desire to have their Sins pardoned, must confess them, for without Confession there is no Remission. And it is highly necessary that we should leave no Sin unconfessed, that we would not have unpardoned : We must also look to it, that our Confession be such as God requires. If it be such as that of *Pharoah, Saul, Judah, &c.* it will avail us no more than theirs did them : And if we expect to have better Success than they had, we must see that our Confession be better than theirs was.

We may likewise observe to whom this Confession is to be made ; and that is to God. The Reasons for it may be these ; because whatever Damage is done to Men by our Sins, the greatest Dishonour is to God, in the Breach of his Righteous Laws : Because it is God only has the Power of forgiving Sins :
And

And because *Confession of Sin* is a special Part of *Divine Worship*.

Besides this, a *Confession of Sin made to Man* is sometimes necessary, either on account of the Injury done to a single Person; and then it must be a private Confession. Or when a Person is charged with the Sin by the *Church*; and then he is to confess publicly, that such his Confession may take away all Offence. But farther,

Let us now consider the Manner of this *Prodigal's Confession*. He does not plead the vanity of Youth, and the Profaneness of his Nature to do Evil; he does not go about to extenuate his Guilt; but on the other Hand, he relates it with most aggravating Circumstances, and he exaggerates it to the third Degree: 1. *I have sinned*: 2. *Against Heaven*: And 3. *In thy Sight*. Thus, to break a lawful Command of a Magistrate, tho' thro' Ignorance, is a Fault; to do it knowingly and wilfully is yet a greater Crime; but to do it so, and in his Sight and Presence too, argues the utmost Contempt.

If then a true *Penitent* is so qualified, that he will lay as much as he can to his own Charge, what shall we think or say of those that study how to extenuate their Sins? They can enlarge upon the Sins of others; they have both the Will and Skill to expatiate upon the Failings and Infirmities of their Enemies, and many times make their Faults appear much greater than they really are. But as for their own Sins, they do all they can to lessen them, and oftentimes they deny them when they are charged with them.

As *Aggravation* is a commendable Circumstance of *Confession*, so also we must come before the *Almighty* with Humility of Soul. As the Waters always flow to the lowest Grounds, which are well watered thereby; so also the humblest Soul is the fittest Recipient of Grace, and retains it best. The likeliest Means to be exalted by God, is to come before him in *Lowliness of Spirit*; and God has promised to look in *Mercy* on such. The full Vessel can receive no Liquor, and the proud Soul is not capable of receiving Grace. Pride is
above

above all other Sins, deservedly called the Devil's First born; and as it is his particular Sin, so it was the first Poison he put into our Natures: And as the Servants of *Christ*, and the Children of God, and known by their Charity and Humility; so the Servants of Sin, and the Sons of Satan are distinguished by their Pride and Cruelty. Humility is an heavenly Grace, disposing a Person both inwardly and outwardly, towards God and Man, to all Acts of Lowliness, in Thoughts, Words, and Deeds. Humility is an adorning Grace, 1 *Pet.* 5. 5. *Be ye clothed with Humility*: The Word *ἐγκοινωνία*, signifies, *be ye knotted*, alluding to the Custom of Women, who were wont to deck their Heads and adorn their Garments with curious Knots. Humility is the Keeper and Preserver of all Graces, but Pride is the Spoiler and Quencher of them. An Heart well furnished with this Grace, makes us like our Lord and Saviour *Christ*; he was meek and lowly of Heart, he washed his Disciples Feet, he made himself of no Reputation, but took on him the Form of a Servant, and
all

all this for our sake; and he it is that has recommended Humility to us; nay, has commanded us to take him for our Pattern, particularly in this Vertue.

Let these be cogent Arguments to us to use our best Endeavours for the embracing and practising this Grace, that so the same Mind may be in us, that was in Christ.



A Dis-

A
DISCOURSE

Concerning

Repentance :

Fully opening the Nature of it :

With some serious Persuasives to the
speedy setting about this Duty.

HAVING in the former
Part of this Book shewn
from the Parable of the
Prodigal Son, how ready
God is to pardon, returning
Sinners, I proceed next to shew what
that *Returning* or *Repenting* is, which
must

43-46-300 B



must qualify them for pardon. The Doctrine of Repentance is the foundation of the Spiritual Building, which, if it be not well laid, we build our House upon the Sands; and such an House must needs fall. It is a great and comprehensive Duty, tho' it is by some thrust into a narrow compass. For tho' we frequently speak of Repentance, and pretend to it, and hear it preached of, yet there is great reason to fear it is but little understood, and less practis'd; and when Men so little understand what Repentance is, it is no wonder that they are often guilty of fatal Mistakes about it. And since many Men are prepossessed with false Notions of this Duty, it will be necessary, before I shew you what Repentance is, to let you know what it is not, and vindicate it from those Mistakes that Men are in about it. And,

1. They are much mistaken, that think Repentance is no more than a parcel of good Words, and exclaiming against our selves as great Sinners, and a loud Crying to God for Mercy. This we can easily do, and love our Sins nevertheless: It breaks none of our Bones
to

to do this, nor does it put us to any Pain at all; nay, we can do it, and yet be inwardly pleased with our Sins in the mean time. This is all the Repentance many Men have, or aim at; they sin, and they confess; but then they sin again, and they confess again, and keep this Round while they live. Many Men do that, which but a little before they confess'd was their Sin, and presently they will confess it again, and yet will go on to commit again, the same things. *This black Circle of sin and confess, and confess and sin, encompasses as well Protestants as Papists.* We think our Sins will do us no more hurt than our Confession does good; so that if at our last Gasp, we can but frame our Breath to the Sound of *Mercy*; and with *the Serpent*, tho' our Ways have been crooked all our Life, we can become strait before we die, we think it is sufficient, and will go well with us. But certainly we have very base and mean Thoughts of God, if we think to charm and cheat him thus easily, if we think to mock him with such ineffectual Confessions as these. What Man

would endure such Usage as this ; will our Neighbour be pleas'd with us, if we confess we have done him wrong, when he sees we continue to do still? Oh, let us not think, that when we have served our *Appetites*, and gratify'd our *Sensual Desires* all our Lives, it will be sufficient to ask *God forgiveness* at leisure, with the last Drawings of a *sinful Breath*! The Devil can well bear we should confess our Sins, if we forsake them not: We shall not much disturb him, by speaking against his Works, if he destroy them not. These are Words of course, that neither trouble the Devil, nor yet please God. The Soldier of Christ must fight, as well as thus bid Defiance against his Sins. And certainly we shall at once shew more Courage as well as more Sincerity, but forsaking our Sins, than by speaking Evil of them.

2. They are as much mistaken, that think all Sorrow that arises in their Minds, occasion'd by Sin, is true Repentance and sorrowing after a *godly Sort*. The whole of Repentance consists not in a melancholy Fit, and hanging down the
the

the Head like a *Bulrush*, retiring a while from Mirth and Company, a sour Face, and moist Eyes: for tho' this Sorrow is a Step to, or a Companion of true *Repentance*, yet alone, it comes much short of the main Work. Such Men do often mislike the Punishment, not the Fault, and give not so much because themselves are wicked, as because God is Just: Their Sins bring Affliction upon them; it is the Affliction not the Sin that makes them sorrowful. They have a certain Presage of the Uneasiness of the *Flames of Hell*, their galled and aking *Conscience* fly in their Faces, they feel great Horror in their Minds for those Sins which the World knows nothing of, and they receive upon their Souls the lesser *Strokes of Hell*. This indeed will make the stoutest Sinner bend, but does not make him a true *Penitent*; for the most wicked Men may repent at this rate, and many times do it. Thus *Judas* repented himself, and was filled with Grief and Sorrow, *Matth. 27. 3.* Yet who believes that he had true *Repentance*? Thus *Ahab* repented and humbled himself. And many times the

Disgrace, the Shame and Misery, which the Sinner, by his Wickedness hath brought upon himself . . . make him very sorrowful, when yet he is far from being truly penitent. These things may humble the Sinner greatly, and this Humiliation may keep off from him some *Temporal Judgment*, yet it will not secure him from an *Eternal one*.

3. They are also grossly mistaken, that take passionate Resolutions of Amendment for Repentance; that mistake the Purpose and Intention for the Thing itself. This is the Case of many Men, that are nevertheless Slaves to the Devil, and led Captive by him at his Will. They are surfeited by their Sins, lash'd by their Consciences, terrify'd by their Convictions, or sometimes awaken'd by the *Judgment of God that follow them*; and then they passionately resolve to lay by their most troublesome Sins, and walk in the more pleasant and delightful Paths of Peace; they are ready to say, *Let us break their Bands asunder, and cast their Cords from us*. And it were inexpressible happy for them, if they had *Courage and Constancy* enough
really

really to perform what they so well resolve. But alas! tho' they call these Purposes by the name of Repentance they quickly return to their Sins, according to the true Proverb, *The Dog is return'd to his own Vomit again, and the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire*, 2 Pet. 2. 22. And then their Actions testify to their Faces that they did but dissemble with God. What shall we call a Disesteeming and Mocking of God, if this be not such? What the Apostle said of some, that they were ever learning, and yet never come to the knowledge of the Truth, is truly applicable to these Men, they are ever repenting, and yet never arriving at true Repentance.

4. It is also a fatal Mistake, to think the outward abstaining from some grosser Acts of Sin, is true Repentance, or any certain Sign of it. This nearly concerns a great Part of Mankind: For there are many, who tho' they will not kill their Brother, yet will hate him; they will not commit Adultery, yet will allow themselves to Lust, They abstain from some Sin which they have formerly follow'd, yet perhaps are as faulty in

something else. They commute some one Sin for some other; which they think more commodious; and such an Exchange they judge very excusable. They will avoid the grosser Enormities which the World observes most, and yet be full of more refined, spiritual and mental Wickedness. They will leave their youthful Lusts when they grow in Years, but when they become Slaves to Covetousness or Ambition, or else are overgrown with *Atheism* and *Unbelief*. They will part with some Vice which they cannot so well follow, and think they have done well, tho' they keep their most desirable Sins. They abstain some time from the *Gratification* of some of their Lusts, not out of Disaffection, but Policy. Nay, sometimes they will sacrifice some of their Lusts to the Religion they own, that others may live. They will not only abstain from, but even strive against some Sins, that they may keep others safe. And upon these Terms, Satan himself will allow us to mortify some Sins; nay, will himself cast the first Stone at them, and like a *rocking Gamester*, purposely lose these petty

petty Stakes, that he may afterwards sweep the Board.

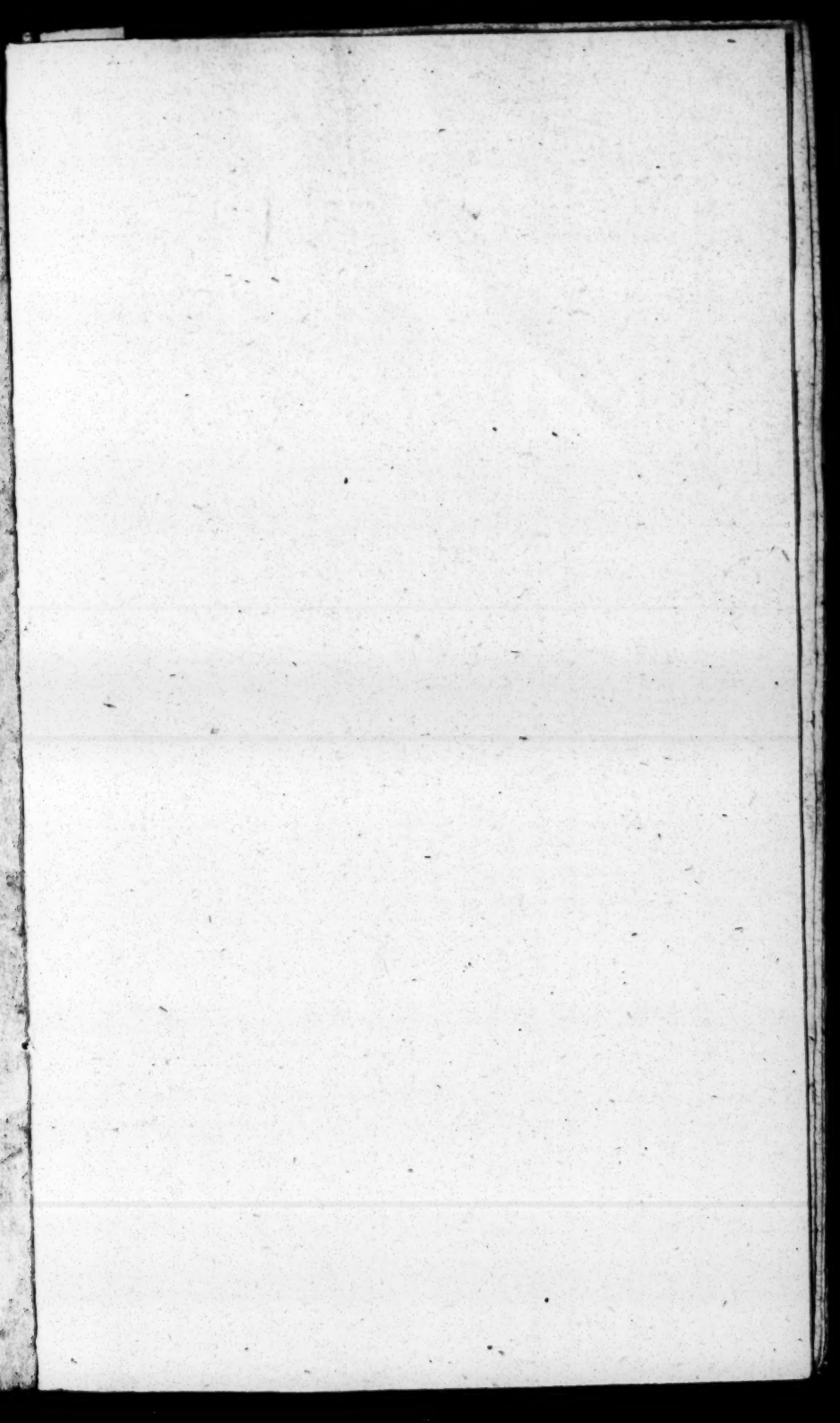
These Things I have named, are not worthy the Name of Repentance, nor yet are they any certain or infallible Signs of it; tho' where there is true Repentance these Things also are; for Repentance requires this, and a great deal more than all this. It is a greater Work, and makes a greater Change than all the foremention'd Particulars amount to; it imports no less than relinquished all our Sins, and turning to GOD; *Ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*, He that truly repents, subdue, not only his Sin, but his Affection to it also. He puts off the old Man, and puts on the New. This is what I come next to treat of; and as I have begun negatively, and shew'd you what Repentance is not, I now proceed to discourse positively of Repentance, and shew you what it really is. And,

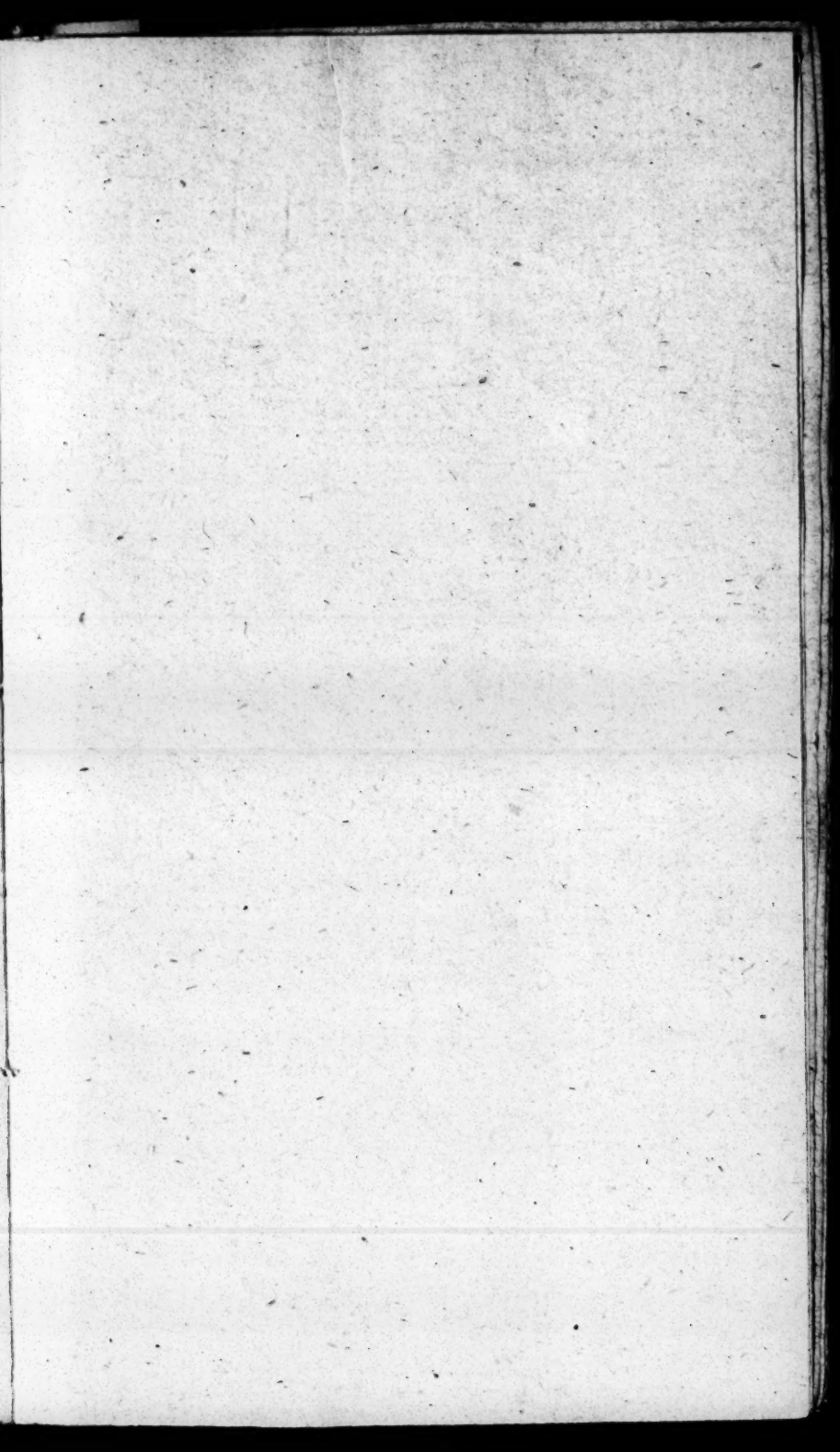
Repentance is a Grace of God, whereby a Sinner, after a true Sense of Sin, and godly Sorrow for Sin, is converted from Sin to God.

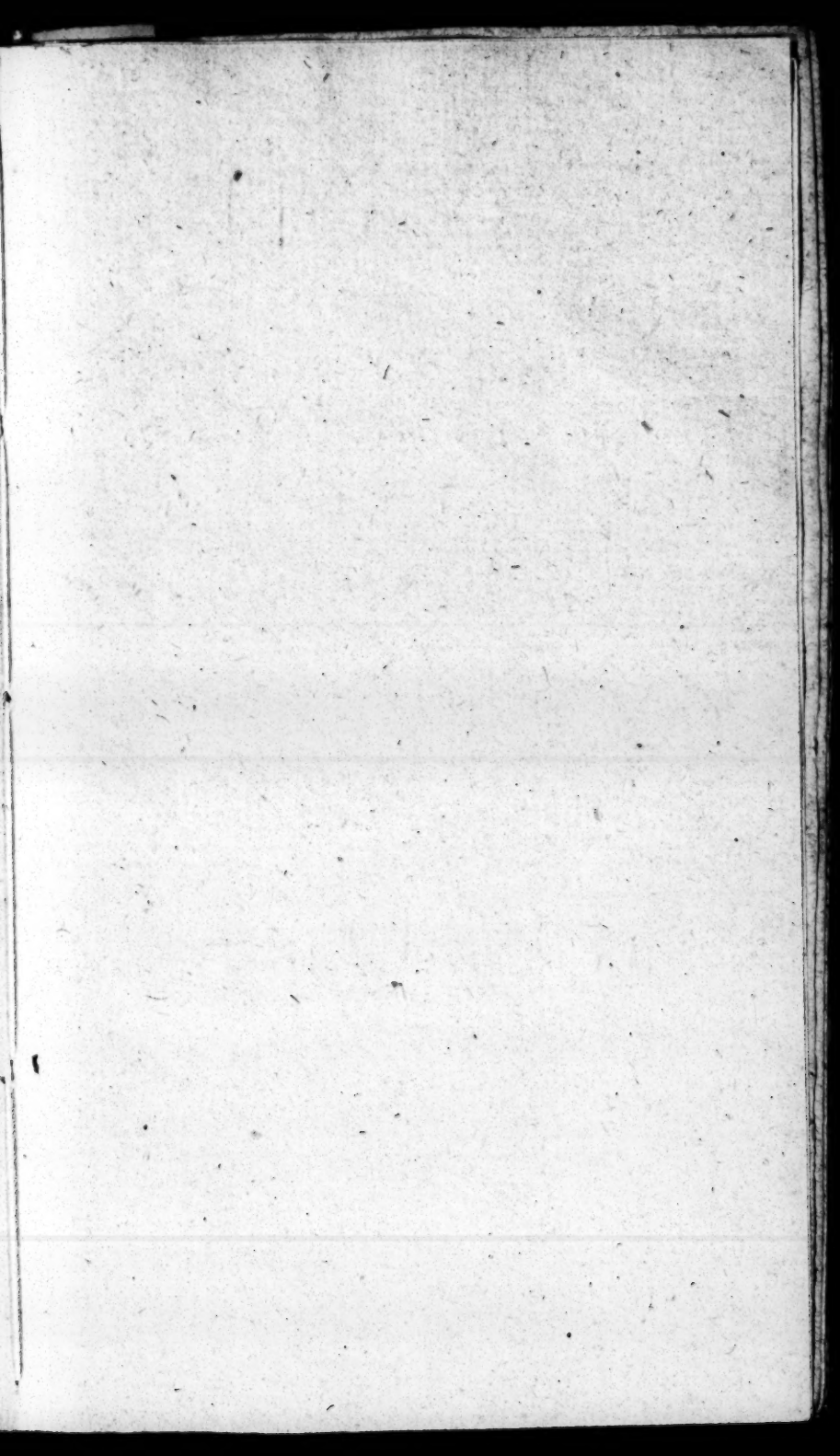
This for the general Definition of Repentance; but, more particularly, it is,

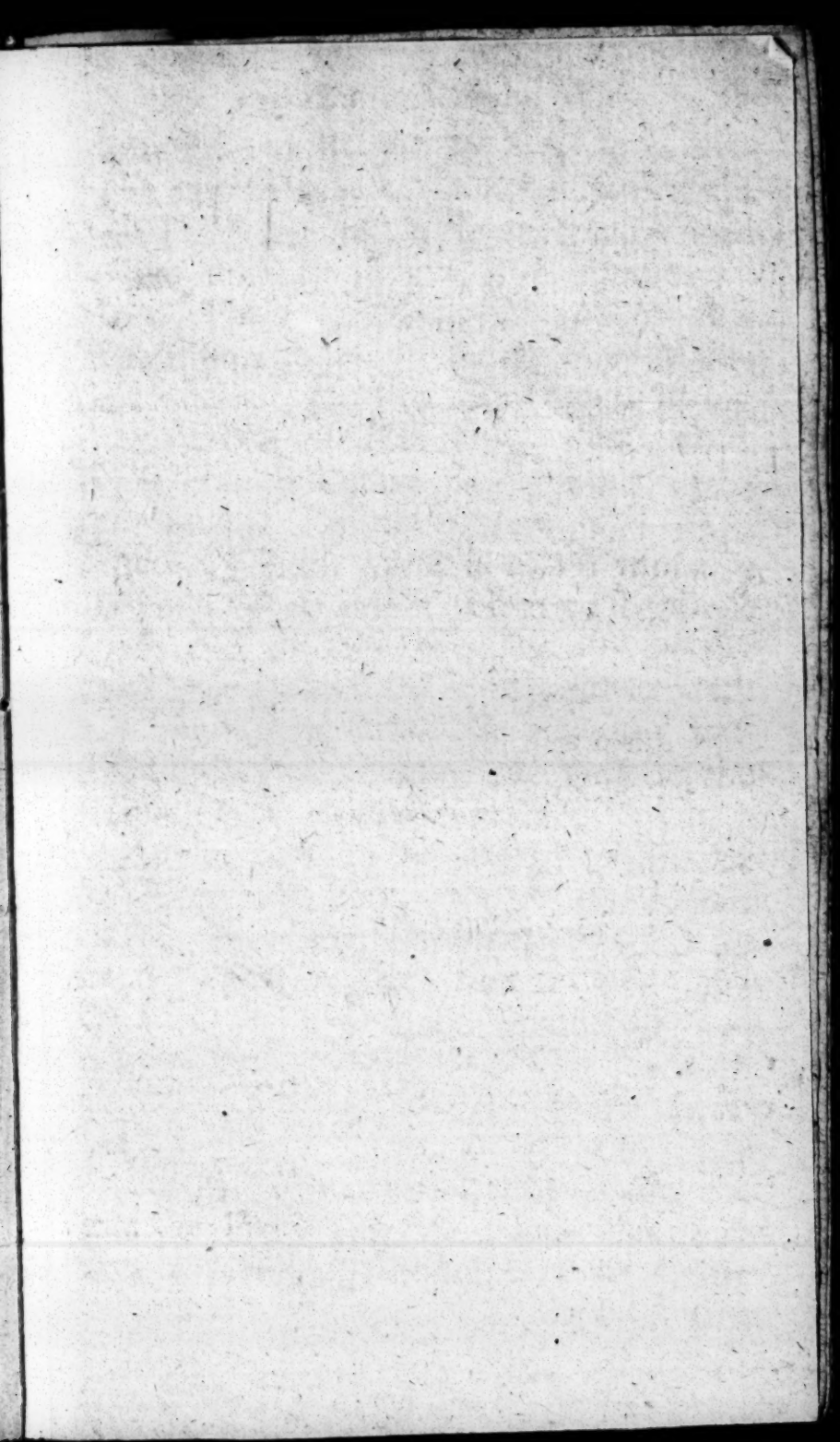
I. A Turning from our Sins, *Ceasing to do evil, Isa. 1. 16.* The true Penitent must turn from all his former evil Ways, and must not only abstain from the Acts of Sin, but he must strive against and get the Mastery over his Affection to, and Desire of Sin. But that this may be better understood, let us consider it under the following Heads.

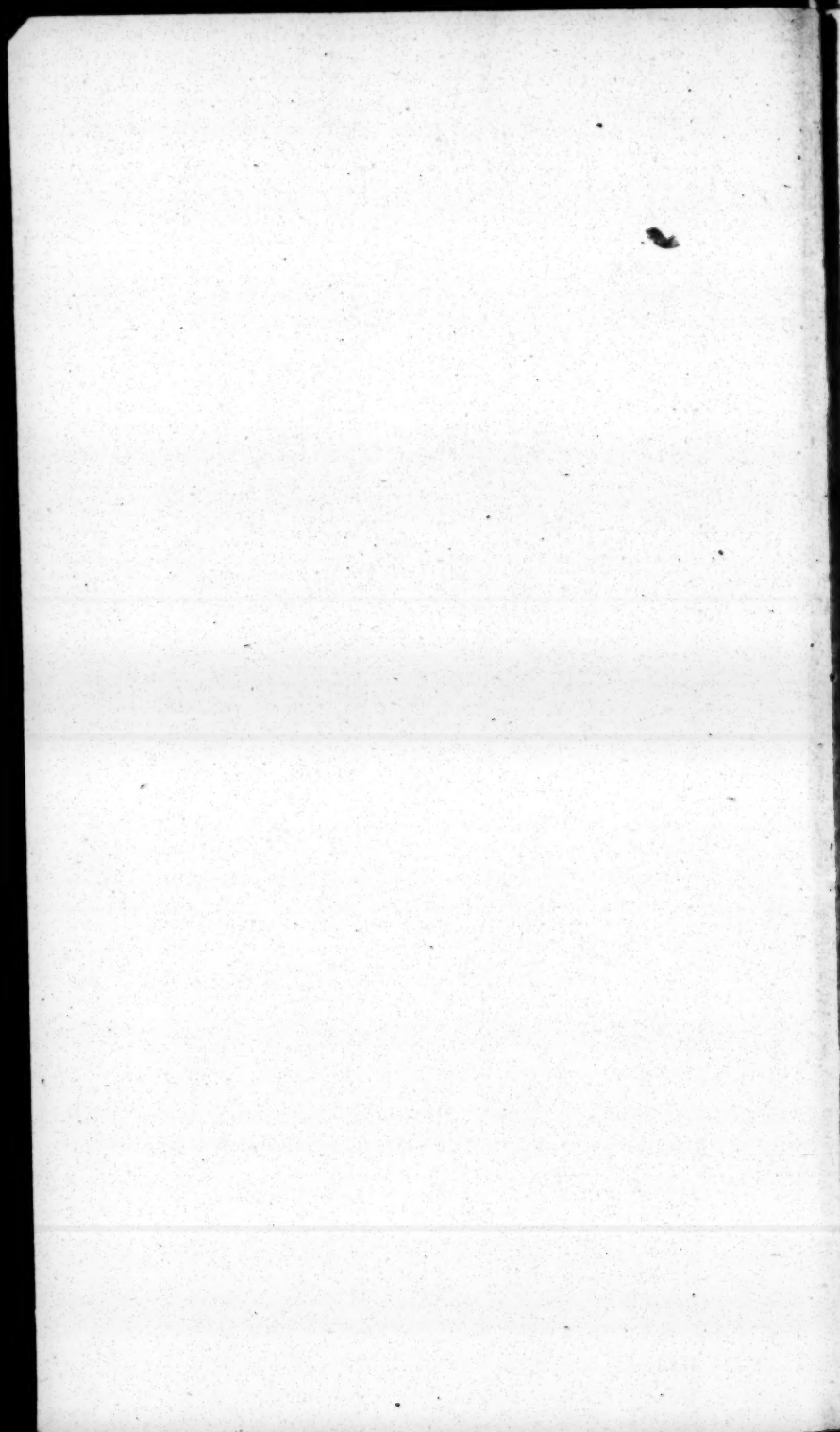
1. It is turning from our Sins when we have Power to commit them. Of many Men it may be said, That their Sin rather leaves them, than they it. To leave off sinning, when we can sin no longer, deserves no Thanks, much less the Title of true Repentance. It was a wise Saying of the Son of Syrach, *There is that is hindered from sinning thro' Want, Eccles. 20. 21.* This sort of Penitents oftner want Strength and Means, or an Opportunity and Temptation, than a Will to commit Sin. They continue in their Sins as long as they are able to follow them, till decrepid Age hath put out the Fire of their Lust, till by their riotous











himself to be drawn to Sin, by a Prospect of Pleasure, must either feel these dreadful Pangs of Conscience, or, which is unspeakably worse, the Flames of Hell. He may otherwise answer this Temptation, by retorting this Argument upon the Tempter, considering the Nature of Holiness, thus, thou say'st, *O mine Enemy*, that there is Pleasure in the Commission of this Sin; whereas I know there is much more in the *Mortification* of it. I fear to displease God, and disobey the *Dictates* of my *Conscience*; and if I should comply with his *Temptation*, I should lose the best *Evidence* of my sincere walking in the *Ways of God's Commandments*.

Again, Satan may tempt to Sin by an Argument drawn from the *Secrecy* of it. Now when a Man is attack'd by his Temptation, let him reflect upon God's Omnipresence, and that his Eye is continually upon him, that by such Considerations he may silence the Tempter.

But if Satan in tempting to Sin argue the Profit and Advantage that may accrue *thereby*; you may likewise retort
this

this Argument, and reflect upon the unprofitable Bargain, which our Saviour mentions in *Matth. 16. 26.* *What will it profit a Man if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what will a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Sometimes the Devil may endeavour to draw us into Sin, from a Consideration of the *Smallness of the Sin*, that it is but a *Peccadillo*. But this may be opposed by a Consideration of the *Greatness of the Majesty of Heaven*, by whom *Sin is forgiven*, and to whom it is an *Offence*. 'Twill be seasonable then to consider also, that the less the Sin, the less the *Inducement* to commit it; and so much the greater the Folly of that Man, that will destroy his *Peace*, wound his *Conscience*, and grieve the *Holy Spirit* for a Trifle.

At other times, perhaps, he will insinuate the *Mercy of God* is an Encouragement to Sin. But let such as are assaulted by this Temptation consider, that if God be a God of such *exceeding Goodness*, it is an Act of the *deepest Baseness*, the *blackest Ingratitude*, and the *greatest Proof* of a dis-ingenious

ous and depraved Mind, to Sin thus presumptuously ; for *Goodness of God should lead us to Repentance.*

Lastly, When we are encouraged to sin, by the Example of several *Holy Men in Scripture*, who sinned, and yet had their *Sins pardoned* ; let us remember, that none ever sinned upon such a Ground as this, that no Examples can justify the Breach of any of *God's Laws*, that these Instances were recorded for Warning, not for Imitation, *1 Cor. 10. 6.* And let us call to mind with what Terrors they were seiz'd for their Sins, let the above-mentioned Passage in the 38th *Psalms* deter us from it.

I thought that these *Preservatives* from Sin, and *Answers to Satan's Temptations*, could no where be more properly placed than under this Head ; and they being very useful to the perfecting of *Repentance*, I have insisted the longer on Perseverance in Well-doing, which, as I have shewn, is a principal Part, and the clearest Evidence of *sincere Repentance.* I now proceed to the Third Article, which is,

3. Renew'd *Repentance* for repeated Sins, and even for *Humane Frailties*. The true *Penitent*, if he falls by the Violence of *Temptation* into Sin, he rises again by a hearty and godly Sorrow. If with *Peter* he denies his Lord, with *Peter* he retires and weeps bitterly. If he miss his Way, as soon as he finds his Error, he returns again, he renews his Place he doubles his Diligence, and returns home again to his Father.

Thus have I shewn, that the first Part of *Repentance*, viz. Turning from Sin, consists in refraining from it when we have Power to commit it; in persisting constantly in it; and in renew'd *Repentance* for casual Sins, and *Humane Frailties*. I pass now to the Second Part of *Repentance*, which is,

II. Turning to God: *Learning to do well*. And this may be properly called *Conversion*. The Degrees of it are these that follow.

1. A due Sight and Sense of the Danger and Misery of our present State. This is indeed a Motive to, as well as a Part of it. When the Sinner is, as it were awaken'd out of a Sleep, and the former

former Part of his Life seems now to have been but as a pleasant Dream ; he sees himself now upon the Brink of Hell, and very near being devoured and swallowed up by those unquenchable Flames. He sees a Fire from Heaven is falling upon his *Sodom*, and the Avenger of Blood is pursuing him, and his Soul is in great Distress for a City of Refuge to fly unto. He is as a Man newly awakened out of a deep Sleep, when the House is on Fire about him, the Building trembles, and the Neighbourhood cries out and he sees that danger, which but a little before was by his Sleep hid from his Eyes. He is like a Traveller in a Foreign Land, that has wander'd securely from his right Way, and is stray'd into Paths of very great Hazard and Danger, which makes him doubtful, and at a Stand ; his Heart misgives him, and he now considers with himself, whither this Way will lead him he suspects that it is too *broad*, and *too much beaten to be* that which leads to *Life* ; now he remembers he hath heard his Saviour say, *That the Way is narrow, and the Gate is strait that leads to*

Life,

Life and there be but few that find it ; he remembers that he hath read in the *Word of God*, that the Paths he now treads in will bring him to *Death*, that *without Holiness no one shall see God*. And when he considers what will be the Consequence of his *evil Ways*, how unable he is to do well with the *devouring Fire*, to lie down in *everlasting Burnings*, and to lose the Favour of God for ever, whose *Benignity is better than Life* : Then it is that he takes the first Step towards *returning to his Father*. He sees that there is but a very little Distance between him and *Destruction*, and that if God takes away his Life, he is undone for ever ; and that nothing in this World can countervail so great a Loss, as that of the *Favour of God*, and the eternal Welfare of his *immortal Soul*. From a serious Sense of these Things he draws such Consequences as tend to make him a *true Convert*. The first Step the *Psalmist* took towards turning his Feet unto God's Testimonies, was that he thought on his Ways. Psalm 119. 59. And (as you have already seen it was when the *Prodigal Son* came to himself, that

that is, when he consider'd the Misery of his *present Condition* that he began to set forward towards his *Father's House*. So that we find it is, from a due Sight and Sense of the Danger, and Misery of our *present Condition*, that there proceeds,

2. A firm Resolution of turning to God: *I will arise and go to my Father*, says the *Prodigal Son*. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments*, says Holy David, Psal. 119. 60. And this Resolution the *true Penitent* does not take up lightly and rashly, but considerately, and upon mature Deliberation. His is such Repentance, as is not to be repented of. He will part with his most *beloved Sins*, and endure great Hardship; he will cut off his Right Hand, and pluck out his Right Eye; yea, he will sell all, to obtain this Pearl of the greatest Price; he is fully resolved for God and Heaven? he is willing to accept of *Jesus Christ* for his Lord and Master, as well as his Priest and Saviour. He is not only for *Salvation by Christ*, but for the *Sanctification of Christ*. He desires to be governed by his Laws, as well

well as to be saved by his Merits. He resolves to follow his *Saviour* thro' all *Difficulties* and *Dangers*; he will not leave him, tho' others do. He says, as *Ruth* to *Naomi*, *Ruth* 1. 11, 12. *Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy People shall be my People, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there I will be buried.* He that truly repents, will follow *Christ* whithersoever he shall lead him. He sits down, as the wise Builder, and considers that this *Undertaking* may cost him no less than his *Reputation* and *Ease*, his *Friends* and *Estate*, yea, his *Liberty* and *Life*. It is greatly to be doubted, that there are but few such *Converts*; yet none but such as are true *Converts*. Many indeed partake of the *Baptism of Christ*, and receive of his *Body* and *Blood*, that will do nothing for him; they indeed call him their *dear Redeemer*, and *blessed Saviour*; yet will not for his *Sake* deny themselves the *Gratification* of a *filthy Lust*. They will follow him for the *Loaves*, and not to the *Cross*; they will cleave to *Christ*, while he feeds them, but when he commands their *Estates*

or

or Liver, they, like the swinish *Gardarens*, for the Loss of a *Herd of Swine*, desire him to depart out of their *Coasts*, *Matth. 8. 34.* or they do as the Ruler in *Luke 18. 23.* who when our *Saviour* told him, he must sell and give to the Poor, *He went away sorrowful, for he was very rich.* But, on the other hand, the true *Convert* counts all but Dross, that he may gain *Christ*; and he is so far convinced of his Misery, without the *Mercy of God*, that he is willing to accept of his Mercy upon any Terms. Therefore it is that he resolves to turn to God *unservedly, deliberately,* and with *stedfast Resolution*, and humbly depends upon God for *Grace and Strength*, to enable him to encounter with, and overcome whatever Difficulties he may meet with. The last Part of our Turning to God, which I shall insist on, is,

3. An actual and entire Resignation of a Man's self unto God; which is the greatest Degree, and the Perfection and Completion of our *Repentance and Conversion.* Then have we truly repented, and not till then, when we
gave

give *God* our Heart, which we formerly set upon the World and our Sins. For the true *Penitent* has bid an *eternal Farewel* to all his *old Companions*, and is become a new *Man*, and is transplanted into a *New Family*; and when he remembers his own evil Courses, it is with Tears in his Eyes, or true Sorrow in his Heart. He has made a solemn Choice of *God* for his Portion and Blessedness. He now esteems *God*, and his *infinite Perfections* and *Excellencies* above all the Pomp and Pageantry to the World. He chuses him in all his *Personal Relations*. He takes *God* for his *Father*; *Christ* for his *Saviour*, his *Redeemer* and *Righteousness*, as the only Way to the *Father*, and Means of Life; and the *Holy Spirit* for his *Sanctifier*, *Councillor*, *Advocate*, *Comforter*, *Instructor*, *Guide* and *Director*, as the Pledge and Earnest of his *Inheritance*. He likewise chuses *God* in all his *essential Perfections*; he takes him for his Lot and Portion, for his *God*, *Rev. 21. 3.* He takes him as an *All-sufficient God. Gen. 17. 1.* He takes him for his *Sovereign Lord*, this is the
Master

Master he will clave to, *Matth. 6. 24.*
 In a Word, he takes him to be as he is,
 a true and faithful God, he is resolved
 to trust in him, *Prov. 3. 5. 1 Tim. 1. 12.*
 He accepts of the Lord Jesus in all his
 Offices, and with all his Inconveniencies.
 He resigns all his *Powers and Faculties*,
 and his whole *Interest* up to God, *2 Cor.*
8. 5. Rom. 12. 1. He chuses the Laws
 of Christ for the Rules of his *Thoughts*,
Words and *Actions*; he chuses them *All*
 and for *All Times*, and this he does de-
 liberately and understandingly,

Thus I have shewn you, that he that
 truly repents, turns *from Sin to God*;
 from which we may observe a very
 remarkable Change wrought in the Pe-
 nitent, which is,

1. A *Change* upon his *Understanding*.
 We find, *Gen. 1. 3.* that in the Creation,
 the first of *God's Works* was Light; and
 God uses the same Method in the New
 Creature. Before the Light was made,
 Darkness was over the Face of the Deep.
 Just so it is with the *Natural Man*; he
 is in very great *Darkness*, till the Eyes
 of his Mind are open'd. This is plainly
 intimated by the Apostles, *2 Cor. 4. 6.*

E

and

and that God forms a *New Creature* after the same manner as he made the *Old*; For God who commandeth the *Light* to shine out of *Darkness*, hath shined in our *Hearts*, to give the *Light* of the *Knowledge* of the *Glory* of God, in the *Faith* of *Jesus Christ*. And we find in the first Chapter of *St. John's Gospel*, ver. 9. that our Saviour is the *True Light* who came into the *World*; and the End of his coming we find in *Luk. 1. 79.* To give *Light* to them that sit in *Darkness*, and in the *Shadow* of *Death*, and to guide our *Feet* into the way of *Peace*. The God of this *World* no more blinds his *Mind*; and he that was once *Darkness*, is now *Light* in the *Lord*. A great *Light* breaks in upon his *Understanding*, the *Scales* fall from his *Eyes*, and he now sees, That the *Ways* of *Sin* are the greatest *Folly*, and the *Fear* of God true *Wisdom*. He sees that *Hell* is no *Fable*, but the unavoidable *Consequent* of a wicked *Life*. He sees that hitherto he has walked upon the very *Brink* and *Borders* of *Hell*; and had it not been for the great *Mercy* of God, he had never seen it till it had been too late. In a *Word*, he sees that he had

no Fruit in those things whereof he is now ashamed; for the End of those things is Death.

2. There is also a remarkable Change wrought upon his Will. Before this Change was wrought, he could pray to God, as to the Matter of his Prayers, very uniformly and agreeably; but his Heart was not right in the sight of God, that pointed at something else, short of what his Words did import. But now he prays earnestly and heartily; he does not only perform an outward Worship to God, but he loves him with all his Heart, and is inwardly delighted with his Service. He has new Ends and Designs in the World; his Desire and Intention is, That GOD may be magnified by him: This is the Mark he aims at, that the Name of Jesus may be great and exalted above every Name in the World. Now he chuses God for his Lord, Holiness for his Path, God's Word for his Heritage for ever, and the Exercises of Religion for his very Nourishment.

3. The Affections are also changed, and run in a new Channel.

His *Hope* is in Christ, and all is counted Dung and Dross in Competition with him; and he is contented to lose any thing else, so he but keep this Jewel.

His *Desires* are not so much for Gold, as Grace. He hungers after it, he seeks narrowly for it, and digs for it as for hid Treasure. He strives not so much to grow more rich, as more holy; and he counts it his greatest Conquest to subdue his Corruptions.

His *Joy*s are more in keeping God's Testimonies, than in great Riches. He delights in the Law of the Lord, and rejoices most in the *Thoughts of Christ*, in his Presence, and the Prosperity of his People.

His *Cares* are now not so much for the World, as for the real Security of his Soul. He is sedulously inquisitive what he shall do to be saved; and when he is informed what is the *Will of God*, he is most assiduous in doing it.

His *Fears* are not so much of *Suffering*, as *Sinning*. Formerly nothing sounded so terrible to him, as *Pain* or *Poverty*, or *Disgrace*: Now these do not appear so

so formidable, when they come in Competition with God's Dishonour or Displeasure. He walks warily, and is always afraid lest he should tread on a Snare. It is a deadly Wound to his Heart, to think of losing God's Favour.

His *Sorrows* and *Grief* have a new Vent, 1 *Cor.* 7. 9. &c. The View of his Sins, the Sight of a Christ crucified, what would scarce stir his Heart before, do now mightily affect him:

His *Love* runs another way now than what it did formerly. With holy *Augustine* and *Ignatius*, he is in his Element, when he is wrapt up in a sweet Contemplation of the Love of Christ, in suffering and dying for, and redeeming lost Mankind.

His *Hatred* boils, and his *Anger* burns against Sin. He is stirr'd with Indignation at himself, when he considers how long he has gone on in Sin, and neglected God, and the eternal Salvation of his immortal Soul. But I proceed :

4. That there is a great and remarkable Change wrought upon him, he shews forth in his *Life* and *Conversation*.

He lived after the manner, and was conformed to the Counsel of this *World*, but now he is transformed, and is resolved that the Time past shall suffice, that he has wrought the Will of the Gentiles. Tho' he lives upon Earth, his Conversation is in Heaven. No sooner has God writ his Law in his Heart, but he thenceforward walks in his Statutes, and keeps his Judgments. Tho' Sin may dwell in him, it has not Dominion over him. He makes most Conscience of the greatest Sins, yet he makes true Conscience of lesser Sins. He does not only tyth the Mint and Cummin, but has also a regard to Mercy and Judgment. He does not pretend to Piety, and neglect Morality; but he delights in the Law of the Lord, and gives himself to Prayer, and he *redeems his Sins by Alms, and his Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor.* Dan. 4. 27. He desires to live honestly, and keep a Conscience void of Offence towards *God* and *Men*. He is merciful to others Failings, and very severe to his own; and can sooner forgive any than himself. He is *resolved* rather to suffer than to sin. He

He is most severe to the Sin that is naturally most dear ; and chuses that soonest which doth cross the Flesh most ; he can rely upon the *Divine Promises*, when others live upon their Possessions ; he allows himself in the Neglect of no Duty, but reserves his highest Zeal for the Duties of most Weight : In a Word, in whatever he does, or goes about, he aims at the *Glory of God*, and to it subjects himself and all his Worldly Interest.

Thus have I shewn you as largely as I could in this narrow Compend, both what Repentance *is not*, and what *it is* : I proceed now practically to improve the whole ; and shall draw from what I have said, a Use of Information, and a Use of Exhortation. I begin with the

First USE of Information.

And from what has been said, we may learn,

1. The great Extent of this Duty. This Inference flows so naturally from what I have been discoursing, that I

need not say much to illustrate it. Review the foregoing Heads, and you will see *Repentance* is not a Duty of so small Consequence and Concernment as most imagine, neither is it so easily performed: For tho' we may repent of all our Sins, and our *Repentance* may be true, and our Sins may be forgiven upon our *Repentance*; yet we must live in the daily Practice of it.

2. We learn hence, that there are but few that truly repent, and that the Number of them that *deceive themselves*, with respect to this Duty, is great. There are many who think *Repentance* consists in exclaiming against *themselves*, as great Sinners, and crying to GOD for Mercy. Others who have suffered many Inconveniences in this Life, by reason of their Sins, and have a *Sorrow* upon them, think that this *Sorrow* must needs be true *Repentance*; never considering that this *Sorrow* is occasioned by their Sufferings for Sin, not by the Sin it self. Others there are, who think that because they have purposed to repent and forsake their Sins, they have truly repented. Others also think that they have

have perform'd this Duty aright, because they are somewhat reform'd, and abstain from the groffer Acts of Sin; tho' this oftentimes proceeds from *Education, Human Laws, or the Force of Affliction*. Others deceive themselves, by thinking their State is good, because they have been baptiz'd into the *Christian Faith*. But alas! the Case of these is extreamly sad and miserable; for those that fairest from *Conversion*, who do not see that they have need of such a Change, or think they are already turn'd. But I proceed to the

Second U S E of Exhortation.

Having gone thus far, I proceed next to exhort you to the *Practice of Repentance*; in order to which (that my *Perswasions* may be more forcible and lasting) I shall make use of the following Motives.

1. It is our Duty, because God commands it, as you may read in many *Places of the Holy Scripture*; of which I shall offer two or three to your Consideration. I begin with that in *Haiah*,

55. 6, 7. *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* This Passage contains not only a Divine Injunction of Repentance, but of speedy Repentance; and not only so, but a gracious Promise of Acceptance and Pardon. See also Joel 2. 13. *Rent your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious, &c.* This is also the Voice of the New Testament, as we may see in *Matth. 3. 2. Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* *Acts. 3. 19. Repent therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the time of Refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.*

2. As it is our Duty, so it is our Interest; for without Repentance there is no Remission of Sins, as is plain from that last recited Passage, where Repentance is said to be not only necessary by a Necessity of Precept, but also by a Necessity of Means. This will further

ther appear, if we but read the following Passages of the Sacred Text; Heb. 12. 14. *Without Holiness no Man shall see God.* Rom. 8. 13. *If we live after the Flesh we shall die.* John 3. 3. *Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Gal. 6. 7. *Whatsoever a Man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption: But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting.* Moreover, the Scriptures tell us distinctly and severally what those Evils are, whereof we must beware. Gal. 5. 19. &c. *Now the Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Sedition, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like: Of the which I tell you before as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And again, Ephes. 5. 6. *For these things sake the Wrath of God comes upon the Children of Disobedience.* Nay, be our Privileges and Prerogatives never so great, yet none of them shall supercede the necessity

cessity of *Repentance* and a *Holy Life*.
 Tho' we have a *Levite* for our Priest,
 and never so Orthodox a *Faith*; yet if
 at the same time we have an Idol for
 our *God*, and our *Manners* be profane,
 we are still in the Way that leads down
 to the *Chambers of Death*. Nay, our
 having been baptized into the *Christian*
Church, and living in a *Christian Nati-*
on, will enhance our *Condemnation*, if
 we live not answerable to so great *Mer-*
cies, To confirm all this, let us con-
 sider the *Nature of God*, who is *Holiness*
it self, and cannot be delighted with
 those that continue impenitent. Let
 us also consider the *Nature of that*
Happiness, which God has reserved for
 those that obey his *Laws*: We are told
 that no *unclean thing* shall enter into it;
 so that he who would be happy, must
 be holy. For as *Wickedness* lays a *Found-*
ation for our *Misery*, and a *Train* for
 our *Destruction*; so *Holiness* here, is of
 absolute *Necessity* to our *Happiness* here-
 after: They being rather two several
Notions of one Thing, than *Things in*
themselves distinct. We are here as
 in a *State of Tryal or Probation*; and
 if

if we improve our Time, if we mortify and subdue our evil Affections, then we shall be removed to an higher Form, and added to *the Spirit of Just Men made perfect*: But if we trifle away our time, or spend it amiss, we shall be thrown down among *Hypocrites* and *Unbelievers*. Nor indeed can it be otherwise: For what shall a wicked Man do in Heaven? Certainly such a State would be a Torment to him, if the Thing were possible: Instead of being his Happiness, it would be his Prison. He would soon be weary of that State, which now he seems so much to desire. What Pleasure would he find in singing perpetual Praises to God, that is now weary of giving him Thanks? What Content wou'd the covetous Worldling find in Heaven? There he will find no Leases or Farms to purchase, no Widows to oppress, no Bargains to make, no Money to put to Usury, no Forfeitures to receive. The Voluptuous Man would find little Pleasure, where is neither Marrying, nor giving [in Marriage; no Tavern or Alehouse, no Jolly Companion to Quaff and Carouse

rouse withal. The proud Man would take little Delight in a constant ascribing all Honour and Praise in GOD. Such Men are not fit for Glory, who are so far from Grace. They are not fit for the Enjoyment of God, and the Society of those that are sanctified; because they have not mortified their *Lust*; therefore they must lie down for ever with the *Devil* and his *Angels*, where they once beloved *sensual Appetites* shall be as so many *Tormentors* to them. Oh then, what an Argument should this be to us, for our *Repenting*, and seeking *Mercy*, while *Mercy* may be had!

(3.) The *Third Motive* I shall use, is, The *dangerous and miserable State* of all those that have not yet truly repented of their Sins. These are within an *Hair's Breadth of Hell*, they walk daily upon the Brink of the *Bottomless Pit*. But to paint out to the Life the deplorable Case they are in, I must decypher to you the most *Diabolical Deformity* of Sin; I must uncover the Face of the deep and devouring Gulph of *Tophet*, and display its Terrors; I must open
the

the Gates of the *infernal Caven*, that they may see what they are like to suffer for their Sins. Next I must bring *Paradise* into view, and represent the *Kingdom of Heaven* as much to Advantage as the Tempter did the *Kingdom of the World*, and the *Glory thereof*, to our Saviour: I must draw an Extract of the *Beauties of Happiness*, and the *Glories of the Gospel*. But, alas! tho' I had the Tongue of the most *Rhetorical Orator*, or the Pen of the readiest Writer, I could not do this. I proceed therefore with my utmost, tho' poor Endeavours, to persuade you to the present and speedy setting about this Duty.

And here let me reason the Case with those that know some Care must be taken of their Souls before they die, and yet put off their *Repentance* to another time; and I doubt not to make it appear, that they egregiously deceive themselves, when they say, they will repent hereafter, and that it is probable they will not repent at all, but will die in their Sins, and be miserable to all Eternity.

(1.) Let

(1.) Let him that says he will repent hereafter, consider what is the Reason why he cannot do it now ; and whether the very same Reason that hinders him from reforming now, will not always hinder him. Say what it is; thou that makest these Delays, that keep thee from reforming presently : Is it the want of Power to do it ; And how dost thou know by Ability will be greater hereafter than now ? Is it because the Rules of the Gospel are severe and strict ? And will they not be as severe hereafter as now they are ? Or dost thou hope that God will unbend his Laws, *which are unalterable*, to stoop to *thy Profaneness* ! Or dost thou delay thy *Amendment* and *Repentance* because thy Sins are many and great, and thou despairest of Mercy ? And will not the mighty *Heap* be as great hereafter as now ? Is it thy Worldly Business ? And will it not always be so ? That which now hinders they will always do so, till it be taken out of the Way : Things standing as they are, the Event and Issue must needs be the same. That which makes thee unfit to Day, will
make

make thee as unfit to Morrow, or any other Time. Nay,

(2.) More unfit. It is here as in a Wound; the longer it continues, the harder it is to be cur'd, whereas a timely Dressing may cure it quickly. A Disease that is timely taken, is easily cur'd; but if it stay till it have altered the Blood, and destroy the Tone and Strength of the Part affected, and has brought a general ill Habit of Body, it may be then past all Remedy. Whatever unfits the now, will make thee much more so hereafter. For as thy Work will then be more hard; so will thy Strength be less, thy Time shorter, thy Discouragements greater, and thy Temptations and Objections stronger than they were before. He that thinks of Repenting on his Death-bed, should remember that he will have a greater Task to do, and less Time and Strength to do it in than now he hath.

If thy Sins are so many, and so great now, that thou dost almost despair of Mercy, certainly they will be more and greater then: If it be troublesome to thee now to *look back* upon thy old Scores,

Scores, surely there will be more of Labour and Discouragement in it, to undo and unravel the Sins of a long Life: If now thou thinkest the Commands of Christ severe and strict certainly hereafter, when thou hast been more engaged in Sin, and longer wedded to the World, and thy Lusts are faster revited to thy Soul, thou wilt think more hardly of a *holy Life*, and the Commands of Christ will be more grievous to thee. If now *Repentance* be so hard a Task, what will it be when thy Day is almost spent, and the Sun of thy Life is setting?

(3.) Consider, thou that say'st thou wilt repent hereafter, whether thou hast not formerly promised to repent, and yet broken thy Word? And if thou hast, why shouldest thou believethy self again? Didst thou never upon some Sick-bed, or under some great Danger, make a Vow, *That if God would deliver thee, he should be thy God*; and yet for all that, when the Danger hath been over thou hast returned to thy Sins and evil Ways again? And hast thou not reason to think, that as thou didst then
but

but dissemble with God, so now thou dost but mock him? Thy deceitful Heart is still in thy Breast, and as ready to impose upon thee as ever.

(4.) Consider thou that say'st, thou wilt repent *to Morrow*, when this *Morrow* will come. Thou wilt repent hereafter, thou say'st; but that is an unlimited Word; whereas *God limiteth a certain Day*, saying, *To Day if you will hear his Voice*. Heb. 4. 7. And again, *Behold now is the accepted Time, behold now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2. God says, *Now*, we say *Hereafter*: God says *To Day*, we say *To Morrow*: God's time is come, but our time is not come. There is no end of these Delays; they are the Devil's Device to draw us into an inevitable Destruction, He can well endure that we should promise to repent hereafter, if in the mean time we live in our Sins. For whatever we may suppose to our selves, it often appears, that he who promises to repent *to Morrow*, does, when *to Morrow* comes, promise the same the next Day; and so on till there be no time left, to run out.

From

From these Considerations, let me earnestly beseech the Reader, as he tends the Welfare of his immortal Soul, to use no more vain Delays. For he that depends on the last Hour, and neglects the present Season, in Hopes of one to come, is like to be deceived at last.



F I N I S.

Friede